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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

VOLUME XXII

EDITION DEFINITIVE

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No. 333

The Human Comedy

SCENES OF PRIVATE LIFE

VOLUME XI

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RASTIGNAC TO THE MARQUISE DE LISTOMÈRE.

At the hour when the Marquis de Listomère rose, about two o'clock in the afternoon, her maid, Caroline, handed her a letter; she read it while Caroline was dressing her hair—an imprudence which a great many young women commit:—

O dear angel of love, treasure of life and of happiness!

At these words, the marchioness sang going to throw the letter into the fire.



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A DOUBLE FAMILY THE PEACE OF THE HOUSEHOLD A STUDY OF WOMAN ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN THE PRETENDED MISTRESS BY WILLIAM WALTON

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WITH EIGHT ETCHINGS BY GEORGES CHARDON, EUGÈNE DECISY, PIERRE-SALVY-FRÉDÉRIC TEYSSONNIÈRES, AND CHARLES-RENÉ THÉVENIN AFTER PAINTINGS BY JOSÉ ROY AND PIERRE VIDAL

IN ONE VOLUME

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A DOUBLE FAMILY

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TO MADAME LA COMTESSE LOUISE DE TÜRHEIM

As a token of remembrance and of the affectionate respect of her humble servant,

DE BALZAC.

A DOUBLE FAMILY

*

The Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, not so long ago one of the most tortuous and most obscure of the streets of the old quarter which surrounds the Hôtel de Ville, wandered along by the little gardens of the prefecture of Paris and came out in the Rue du Martroi, exactly at the angle of an old wall, now demolished. Here stood the turnstile to which this street was indebted for its name, and which was not destroyed till 1823, at the time that the city of Paris erected, on the site of a little garden of the Hôtel de Ville, a ball room for the fête given to the Duc d'Angoulême on his return from Spain. The widest part of the Rue du Tourniquet was at its opening into the Rue de la Tixeranderie, where it was only about five feet wide. Thus, in rainy weather, the floods of blackish waters rose promptly to bathe the feet of the old houses on each side of this street, bringing with them the refuse deposited by each household in the corners. As the scavengers' carts were not able to pass through it, the inhabitants depended upon the storms to clean their always muddy street; and how could it be clean?

When in summer the sun darts its rays perpendicularly upon Paris, a scrap of gold, as sharp as the blade of a sabre, illuminated, momentarily, the shadows of this street without being able to dry the permanent dampness which prevailed from the pavement up to the first floor of these black and silent houses. The inhabitants, who, in the month of June, lit their lamps at five o'clock in the afternoon, did not extinguish them at all during the winter. Even to-day, if some courageous pedestrian should wish to go from the Marais to the quais, by taking, at the end of the Rue du Chaume, the Rues de l'Homme-Armé, Des Billettes and Des Deux-Portes, which lead to that of the Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, he will think that he has walked over nothing but cellars. Nearly all the streets of old Paris, the splendor of which has been so vaunted in the chronicles, resembled this damp and gloomy labyrinth in which the antiquarians may still find a few historical curiosities to admire. Thus, when the house which was at the corner of the Rues du Tourniquet and De la Tixeranderie was still standing, there might still be seen by observers the marks of the two great iron rings let into the wall, a remnant of those chains which the officer of the quarter caused to be stretched across the street every night for the public security. This house, remarkable for its age, had been built with precautions which bore testimony to the insalubrity of these ancient dwellings, for, in order to render the apartments on the ground floor more healthful, the arches of the basement had been

elevated about two feet above the ground, which necessitated the mounting of three steps in order to enter the building. The casing of the outer door described a round arch, the keystone of which was ornamented with a female head and some arabesques defaced by time. Three windows, the sills of which were at the height of a man from the ground, opened into a little apartment in that part of the ground floor which faced the Rue du Tourniquet, from which it got its light. These dilapidated windows were defended by great bars of iron widely separated and finishing in a round boss similar to that which terminates the gratings of the bakers. If, during the day, some curious passer-by looked into the two chambers which composed this apartment, it would have been impossible for him to have seen anything, for, in order to perceive in the second chamber two beds covered with green serge, placed together under the woodwork of an old alcove, it would have required the sunshine of July; but in the afternoon, about three o'clock, when the candle was lit, there could be seen, through the window of the first room, an old woman seated on a stool at the corner of the fireplace, where she was stirring a chafing-dish in which was seething one of those ragouts similar to the stews which the porters' wives prepare. A few scarce cooking or household utensils hanging on the wall at the end of this room were faintly revealed in the obscurity. At this hour, an old table, placed upon an X, but unfurnished with linen, was set out

with a few dishes in tin and the repast cooked by the old woman. Three dilapidated chairs furnished this apartment, which served both for kitchen and for dining-room. Over the mantel was placed a piece of a mirror, a steel, three glasses, some matches and a large white pot with a piece broken out of it. The square space of the room, the utensils, the chimney-piece, everything, however, was pleasant because of the spirit of order and of economy which prevailed in this sombre and cold retreat. The pale and wrinkled countenance of the old woman was in harmony with the obscurity of the street and the rustiness of the house. To see her in repose, seated in her chair, you would have said that she belonged in this house as a snail belongs in its brownish shell; her countenance, in which an undefinable, vague expression of malice revealed itself through an affected good-nature, was crowned by a tulle cap, round and flat, which concealed but indifferently her white hair; her large gray eyes were as quiet as the street, and the innumerable wrinkles of her face might be compared to the cracks in the walls. Whether it were that she had been born in poverty, or that she had fallen from a past state of splendor, she seemed to have long been resigned to her sad existence. From the rising of the sun to the evening, excepting during the moments when she was preparing the repasts and those in which, with a basket on her arm, she went out to procure the provisions, this old woman lived in the other room, before the last window, opposite a young girl. At

any hour of the day, the passers-by could see this young workwoman, seated in an old red velvet arm-chair, her head bent over an embroidery frame, toiling assiduously. Her mother had a green tambour on her knees and occupied herself with making tulle; but her fingers managed the bobbins but stiffly; her eyesight was poor, for her sexagenarian nose carried a pair of those antique glasses which maintained themselves on the end of her nostrils by the pressure of a spring. In the evening, these two laborious creatures placed between them a lamp, the light of which, passing through two glass globes filled with water, threw upon their work a strong illumination which enabled one to see the finest threads furnished by the bobbins of her tambour, and the other, the most delicate designs traced upon the stuff to be embroidered. The curving of the window bars had enabled the young girl to place upon the sill a long wooden box filled with earth in which grew sweet peas, nasturtiums, a little sickly honeysuckle and a convolvulus, the feeble tendrils of which clutched at the bars. These almost etiolated plants produced pale flowers, one harmony the more which contributed something undefinable of sorrowful and of gentle to the picture presented by this window, the opening of which framed in well these two figures. From only a casual glimpse of this interior, the most egotistical passer-by might carry away a complete picture of the life which the working-classes lead in Paris, for the embroiderer seemed to live only by her needle. There were a

great many who did not get as far as the turnstile without asking themselves how a young girl could keep her color while living in such a cellar. Had a student passed by there to gain the Latin Quarter, his lively imagination would have compared this obscure and vegetative life to that of the ivy which tapestries the cold walls, or to that of those peasants devoted to toil, and who are born, labor, die unknown by the world which they have nourished.

A retired merchant said to himself, after having examined the house with the eye of an owner:

"What would become of these two women if embroidery should go out of fashion?"

Among all those whom an employment in the Hôtel de Ville or in the Palais compelled to pass through this street at certain hours, either to go to their respective avocations or to return to their various dwellings, perhaps there might be found some charitable heart. Perhaps some widower, or some Adonis of forty, from having explored the depths of this unhappy life, came to count upon being able to possess, through the distress of the mother and the daughter, at some cheap price, the innocent workwoman whose dimpled and active hands, fresh neck and white skin, an attraction doubtless due to living in this street without sun, might have excited his admiration. Perhaps also some honest employé with a salary of twelve hundred francs, a daily witness of the assiduity which this young girl brought to her work, counting upon the purity of her life, was waiting for an advancement

to unite an obscure life to an obscure life, one persistent labor to another, bringing at least a man's arm to sustain this existence and a peaceful love, uncolored as the flowers in her window. Some vague hopes animated the dull and gray eyes of the old mother. In the morning, after the most modest of possible breakfasts, she returned to take up her tambour rather through habit than through obligation, for she placed her glasses upon a little work-table of reddened wood, as old as herself, and passed in review, from half-past eight o'clock to about ten, the people who were in the habit of traversing the street; she received their glances, made observations upon their walk, upon their toilets, upon their physiognomies, and seemed to offer them her daughter, so much did her talkative eyes endeavor to establish between them sympathetic affections, by a by-play worthy of the side-scenes. It could readily be seen that this review was for her a theatrical show, and perhaps her sole pleasure. The daughter seldom lifted her head; modesty, or perhaps the painful feeling of her poverty, seemed to keep her eyes constantly on her work; so that, for her to have shown to the passers-by her ruffled aspect, it was necessary for her mother to have uttered some exclamation of surprise. The employé wearing a new coat, or the habitué who showed himself with a woman on his arm, might then perceive the slightly retroussé nose of the young workwoman, her little pink mouth, and her gray eyes always sparkling with life, notwithstanding her wearing fatigue; her laborious

sleeplessness scarcely betrayed itself other than by a circle more or less white under each of her eyes, upon the fresh skin of her cheeks. The poor child seemed to have been born for love and for mirth;—for love, which had painted over her close eyelids two perfect arches, and which had given her a so ample wealth of chestnut hair that she could have hidden herself in her tresses as in a drapery impenetrable to a lover's eye; for mirth, which moved her sensitive nostrils, which made two little pits in her fresh cheeks and enabled her to so promptly forget her troubles: for mirth, that flower of hope, which gave her the strength to perceive, without shuddering, the arid highway of life. The hair of the young girl was always carefully combed. According to the custom of the workwomen of Paris, her toilet seemed to her to be finished when she had smoothed her hair and brought up in two bows the little cluster which played on each side on the temples and was relieved against the whiteness of her skin. The line of the growth of her hair was so graceful, the edge of bistre so distinctly defined on her neck suggested such charming ideas of her youth and of her attractiveness, that the observer, seeing her constantly bent over her work, unless some noise caused her to lift her head, might readily have accused her of coquetry. Such seductive promises excited the curiosity of more than one young man, who looked back in vain in the hope of seeing this modest countenance.

"Caroline, we have one more regular passer-by, and not one of our old ones is worthy of him."

These words, pronounced in a low voice by the mother, one morning in the month of August, 1815, had overcome the indifference of the young workwoman, who looked out in the street in vain; the unknown was already at a distance.

"In which direction did he fly away?" she asked.

"He will come back, doubtless, at four o'clock; I shall see him coming, and I will give you notice by pushing your foot. I am certain that he will pass again, it is now three days that he has been going through our street; but he does not keep exactly the same hours: the first day he came at six o'clock; the day before yesterday at four, and yesterday at three. I remember having seen him before, at different times. He is some employé of the prefecture who has changed his apartment in the Marais. Look," she added, after having cast her eyes again into the street, "our monsieur with the chestnut-colored coat has put on a wig; how it changes him!"

The monsieur with the chestnut-colored coat seemed to have been that one of the habitués who closed the daily procession, for the old mother resumed her glasses and took up her work again, uttering a sigh and throwing upon her daughter a look so singular that it would have been difficult for Lavater himself to have analyzed it; admiration, thankfulness, a sort of hope for a better future were mingled in it with the pride of possessing so pretty a daughter. That afternoon, about four o'clock, the old woman pushed Caroline's foot, and the latter lifted her nose in time to see the new actor whose

periodical passage was going to animate the scene. Tall, slender, pale and clothed in black, this man, of about forty years of age, had something solemn in his walk and his appearance; when his wild and piercing eye met the dulled look of the old woman, he caused her to tremble, he seemed to her to have the gift or the habit of reading the depths of human hearts, and his encounter must be as glacial as was the air of this street. The earthy and greenish tint of this terrible visage, was it the result of excessive labors, or produced by delicate health? This problem was solved by the old mother in twenty different manners; but the next morning, Caroline discovered at once on this countenance which frowned so easily, the traces of a long suffering of the soul. Slightly hollowed, the cheeks of the unknown retained the impression of the seal with which Misfortune marks his subjects,—as if to leave them the consolation of recognizing each other with a fraternal eye and of uniting to resist him. The heat was at this moment so great, and the distraction of this monsieur so complete, that he had not put on his hat in traversing this unwholesome street. Caroline could thus notice the appearance of severity which the stiff and upright manner in which the hair was worn on the forehead, gave to this countenance. If the young girl's look was at first animated by a quite innocent curiosity, it took on a gentle expression of sympathy as the passer-by disappeared, not unlike that of the last relative who brings up the end of the funeral procession. The

impression, lively, but without any charm, which Caroline experienced at the sight of this man, had no resemblance to any of the sensations which the other frequenters of the street had caused her: for the first time her compassion was awakened for another than for herself or her mother; she made no response to the grotesque conjectures which furnished food for the irritating loquacity of the old woman, and drew in silence her long needle over and under the stretched tulle; she regretted that she had not seen the stranger better, and waited for the next day, to form a definite judgment concerning him. It was the first time, also, that one of the frequenters of the street had suggested to her so many reflections. Usually, she replied only by a sad smile to the suppositions of her mother, who in each passer-by hoped to find a protector for her daughter. If such ideas, imprudently announced, did not awaken any evil thoughts, we may attribute the thoughtlessness of Caroline to that obstinate labor, unfortunately necessary, which consumed the strength of her precious youth, and which must infallibly alter some day the limpidity of her eyes, or ravish from the white cheeks the tender colors which still shaded them. For nearly two long months the *black monsieur*, so was he called, had very capricious habits,—he did not always pass through the Rue du Tourniquet; the old woman often saw him in the evening without having perceived him in the morning; he did not return at such fixed hours as the other employés who served as a

clock to Madame Crochard; and finally, excepting at the first meeting, when his eyes had inspired a sort of fear in the old mother, his attention never seemed to be attracted to the picturesque tableau presented by these two female gnomes. With the exception of two great gates and the obscure shop of a dealer in old iron, there were to be found at this period in the Rue du Tourniquet only windows with gratings which lit grudgingly the stairways of some neighboring houses—the lack of curiosity on the part of the passer-by could not then be justified by dangerous rivalries; Madame Crochard was therefore vexed to see her *black monsieur* always gravely preoccupied, keeping his eyes fixed on the pavement, or raised and looking ahead of him, as if to read the future in the fogs of the Tourniquet. Nevertheless, one morning, toward the end of the month of September, the sprightly head of Caroline Crochard detached itself so brilliantly against the dusky background of her chamber, and showed itself so fresh in the midst of the belated flowers and the withered leafage interlaced around the bars of the window; in short, the daily scene presented oppositions of shadow and light, of white and of pink, so happily united with the muslin dress of the gentle workwoman, with the brownish and reddish tones of the armchair, that the unknown looked very attentively at the effects of this living picture. Wearied with the indifference of her black monsieur the old mother had, in truth, taken it upon herself to make such a clicking with her bobbins that the mournful and anxious

pedestrian was perhaps compelled by this unusual noise to look in at her house. The stranger exchanged with Caroline only a look, rapid it is true, but in which their souls came lightly into touch, and the presentiment came to both of them that they would think of each other. When in the afternoon at four o'clock the unknown returned, Caroline distinguished the sound of his footsteps upon the resonant pavement, and when they examined each other there was on each side a sort of premeditation,—the eyes of the pedestrian were animated by a sentiment of friendliness which caused him to smile, and Caroline blushed; the old mother watched them both with a satisfied air. Dating from that memorable morning, the black monsieur traversed twice a day the Rue du Tourniquet, with some rare exceptions, which the two women readily recognized; they judged, from the irregularity of his hours of return, that he was neither so promptly released nor so strictly exact as a minor employé. During the first three months of the winter, twice a day, Caroline and the passer saw each other thus during the time it took him to traverse the portion of the sidewalk opposite the door and the three windows of the house. From day to day, this rapid interview took on a character of friendly intimacy, which in the end contracted something of a fraternal character. Caroline and the unknown seemed to have comprehended each other from the first; then, through examining each other's countenances, they acquired a profound acquaintance with each other.

It soon came to be like a visit which the passer owed to Caroline; if, by chance, her black monsieur passed without bringing her the smile half formed round his eloquent mouth or the friendly look in his brown eyes, there was something lacking in her day. She was like those old men to whom the reading of their daily journal has become such a pleasure that, the day after a solemn fête, they go about all distracted, demanding, as much through oversight as through impatience, the sheet by the aid of which they forget for a moment the emptiness of their existence. But these fugitive appearances had, as much for the unknown as for Caroline, the interest of a familiar conversation between two friends. The young girl could no more hide away from the intelligent eye of her silent friend a sadness, an anxiety, an illness, than the latter could conceal his preoccupation from Caroline. "Something went wrong with him yesterday," was the thought which often arose in the workwoman's heart when she looked at the changed countenance of the black monsieur. "Oh! how much he has worked!" was an exclamation due to other shades of expression which Caroline knew how to distinguish. The unknown divined also that the young girl had passed her Sunday in finishing the dress in the design of which he was interested; he saw, at the approach of rent day, that pretty face shadowed by anxiety, and he felt instinctively that Caroline had watched the night before; but he had, above all, noticed how the sad thoughts, which took the bloom

from the gay and delicate features of this young countenance, dissipated themselves as their acquaintance had ripened. When the winter came to wither the stems, the leafage of the little garden which had adorned the window, and when the window was closed, the unknown saw, not without a gently malicious smile, the extraordinary clearness of the glass at the level of Caroline's head. The parsimony of fire, some traces of a redness which dyed the faces of the two women, revealed to him the indigence of the little household; but if some sorrowful compassion was then depicted in his eyes, Caroline proudly opposed to him a feigned gaiety. In the meanwhile, the sentiments that had budded in the depths of their hearts remained buried there, without any event coming to teach one to the other their strength and their extent; they did not even know the sound of each other's voices. These two mute friends guarded themselves, as against an unhappiness, from engaging themselves in any more intimate union. Each of them seemed to fear to bring to the other a misfortune heavier than that with which separation tried him. Was it this modesty of friendship which thus arrested them? Was it that apprehension of egotism, or that atrocious distrust which separates all the inhabitants inclosed within the walls of a populous city? Did the secret voice of their conscience warn them of a near peril? It would be difficult to explain the sentiment which rendered them as much enemies as friends, indifferent one to the other as they were

mutually attached, as united by instincts as they were separated by the actual facts. Perhaps each of them wished to preserve his own illusions. It might have been said sometimes that the black monsieur feared to hear some coarse words issue from those lips, as fresh, as pure as a flower, and that Caroline did not think herself worthy of this mysterious being in whom everything revealed power and fortune. As to Madame Crochard, that tender mother, almost discontented with the indecision in which her daughter remained, showed a pouting air to her black monsieur, on whom she had up to this time smiled with an air as complaisant as servile. Never had she complained so bitterly to her daughter of being obliged, at her age, to do the cooking; at no period had her rheumatism and her catarrh drawn from her so many groans; and, finally, she was not able to make, during this winter, the number of yards of tulle on which Caroline had reckoned up to this time. Under these circumstances, and toward the end of the month of December, at the period when the price of bread was the highest, and when there was already experienced the beginning of that dearness of grain which rendered the year 1816 so cruel to the poor, the passer observed on the young girl's countenance—her name being still unknown to him—the dreadful ravages of some secret care, which her friendly smiles did not dissipate. Presently, he recognized in Caroline's eyes the withering indications left by nocturnal work. On one of the last nights of this month, he

returned, contrary to his custom, about one o'clock in the morning, by the Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean. The silence of the night permitted him to hear at a distance, before reaching Caroline's house, the tearful voice of the old mother and the still more mournful one of the young workwoman, the echoing sounds of which were mingled with the whistling of a snow-storm; he endeavored to approach with noiseless footsteps; then, at the risk of being arrested, he concealed himself before the window to listen to the mother and daughter, watching them through the largest of the holes which riddled the curtains of yellowed muslin, and made them resemble the large leaves of the cabbage when eaten full of round holes by the caterpillars. The curious pedestrian saw a stamped paper upon the table which separated the tambour from the embroidery frame, and on which was placed the lamp between its two globes full of water. He readily recognized a summons. Madame Crochard was weeping, and Caroline's voice had a guttural sound which altered its gentle and caressing timbre.

"Why do you afflict yourself so, mother? Monsieur Molineux will not sell our furniture and turn us out of the house before I have finished this dress; only two nights more, and I will take it to Madame Roguin."

"And if she makes you wait, as she always does? But will the price of your dress also pay the baker?"

The spectator of this scene had such skill in reading the human countenance, that he thought he perceived as much falseness in the grief of the mother

as of truth in the daughter's distress; he immediately disappeared, and returned a few moments later. When he looked again through the hole in the muslin, the mother was in bed; bending over her task, the young workwoman was plying her needle with an indefatigable activity; on the table, by the side of the legal summons, was a triangular piece of bread, doubtless placed there for her nourishment during the night, while at the same time reminding her of the reward of her courage. The black monsieur shuddered with pity and sorrow; he threw his purse through a broken pane of the window in such a manner that it fell at the feet of the young girl; then, without waiting to enjoy her surprise, he hastened away, his heart beating, his cheeks on fire. The next morning, the gloomy and mournful unknown passed by, affecting a preoccupied air, but he could not escape Caroline's gratitude,—she had opened the window and was amusing herself by digging with a knife in the square box covered with snow, a pretext, the ingenious awkwardness of which announced to her benefactor that she did not wish, this time, to see him only through the window panes. The embroiderer, with her eyes full of tears, made a sign of her head toward her protector as if to say to him: "I can only pay you with my heart." But the black monsieur appeared to comprehend nothing of the expression of this true gratitude. In the evening when he passed again, Caroline, who was occupying herself by pasting a piece of paper over the broken pane, was able to smile upon him,

showing him, like a promise, the enamel of her white teeth. The black monsieur from that date took another road, and no longer showed himself in the Rue du Tourniquet.

In the first days of the following May, one Saturday morning when Caroline perceived, between the two black lines of the houses, a little portion of a cloudless sky, and while she was watering from a glass the stalk of her honeysuckle, she said to her mother:

"Mamma, we must go to-morrow to take a walk at Montmorency!"

Scarcely had she uttered this phrase with a joyous air when the black monsieur came by, more sad and overwhelmed than ever; the chaste and caressing look which Caroline threw upon him might be taken for an invitation. Thus, the next morning, when Madame Crochard, arrayed in a redingote of brownish-red merino, a silk hat and a shawl with large stripes imitating cashmere, presented herself at the corner of the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis and of the Rue d'Enghien to select one of those little public carriages that run out to the suburbs of Paris and are called "cuckoos," she found her unknown there, planted on his two feet like a man who was waiting for his wife. A smile of pleasure unwrinkled the stranger's face when he saw Caroline, whose little foot was shod with a gaiter of prunella, puce color, whose white dress, blown by a wind treacherous for badly shaped women, revealed attractive outlines, and whose face, shaded by a hat of rice straw lined with

pink satin, was as if illuminated by a celestial reflection; her large girdle of puce color set off a waist that could be enclosed between the two hands; her hair, parted in two large bandeaux of bistre upon a forehead as white as snow, gave her an air of candor which nothing could deny. Pleasure seemed to render Caroline as light as the straw of her hat, but there was in her a hope which eclipsed all at once her adornment and her beauty when she saw the black monsieur. The latter, who seemed irresolute, was perhaps decided to serve as traveling companion to the workwoman by the sudden revelation of the happiness caused by his presence. He secured, to go to Saint-Leu-Taverny, a cabriolet, the horse of which seemed good enough; he invited Madame Crochard and her daughter to take their places in it. The mother accepted without any urging; but when the carriage was on the Saint-Denis road she bethought herself to have scruples and hazarded a few civilities upon the inconvenience which two women would cause their companion.

"Monsieur perhaps wished to go alone to Saint-Leu?" she said with a counterfeit good nature.

But she did not delay complaining of the heat, and above all of her catarrh, which, she said, had not permitted her to close her eyes during the night; therefore, the vehicle had hardly reached Saint-Denis when Madame Crochard appeared to go to sleep; some of her snores seemed suspicious to the black monsieur, who knit his brows and looked at the old woman with a singularly suspicious air.

"Oh! she is asleep," said Caroline, naïvely; "she has not stopped coughing since yesterday evening. She must be very tired."

For all reply, the traveling companion threw upon the young girl a shrewd smile, as if to say to her: "Innocent creature, you do not know your mother!" Meanwhile, notwithstanding his suspicions, and when the carriage was rolling along in that long avenue of poplars which leads to Eaubonne, the black monsieur believed Madame Crochard really asleep; perhaps also he did not care to examine just to what degree this slumber was feigned or real. Whether it were that the beauty of the sky, the pure air of the country and those intoxicating perfumes diffused by the first shoots of the poplars, by the buds of the willows and by those of the white thorns had disposed his heart to expand, as Nature herself expanded; whether it were that a long constraint had become tiresome to him, or that the sparkling eyes of Caroline had responded to the disquietude of his own, the black monsieur began with her a conversation as vague as the swaying of the trees under the effects of the breeze, as wandering as the turnings of the butterfly in the blue air, as little reasoning as the softly melodious voice of the fields, but tinged like Nature with a mysterious love. At this period of the year, is not the country trembling like a bride who has assumed her wedding dress, and does it not convoke to pleasure the coldest souls? To leave the gloomy streets of the Marais, for the first time since the last autumn, and to find

one's self in the bosom of the harmonious and picturesque valley of Montmorency; to traverse it in the morning, having before the eyes the infinite of its horizons, and to be able to bring back from them one's regard to eyes that also depict the infinite in expressing love, what hearts would remain icy, what lips would keep a secret? The unknown found Caroline more cheerful than intelligent and imaginative, more loving than learned; but if her laugh revealed her frolicsomeness, her words promised a true feeling. When to the sagacious interrogations of her companion, the young girl replied with that effusion of the heart of which the inferior classes are so prodigal without any of the reticences of people of the world, the countenance of the black monsieur became animated and seemed to take on a new life; his physiognomy lost by degrees the sadness which contracted his features; then, from one tint to another, it took on an air of youthfulness and a character of beauty which rendered Caroline both happy and proud. The pretty embroiderer divined that her protector, long separated from all tenderness and love, no longer believed in the devotion of a woman. Finally, an unexpected sally of Caroline's light gossip lifted the last veil which concealed on the face of the unknown his real youthfulness and his primitive character; he seemed to declare an eternal separation from his importunate ideas, and displayed the vivacity of soul which the solemnity of his countenance did not reveal. The conversation became insensibly so familiar that at

the moment when the carriage stopped at the first houses of the long village of Saint-Leu, Caroline was calling the unknown "Monsieur Roger." For the first time only then, the old mother awoke.

"Caroline, she has heard everything?" said Roger, with a suspicious voice in the young girl's ear.

Caroline replied with a ravishing smile of incredulity which dissipated the dark cloud which the fear of a cold calculation on the part of the mother had caused to fall on the forehead of this mistrustful man. Without being surprised at anything, Madame Crochard approved of everything, followed her daughter and Monsieur Roger into the park of Saint-Leu, which the two young people had agreed to enter to visit the laughing meadows and the balmy groves celebrated by the taste of Queen Hortense.

"*Mon Dieu!* how beautiful that is!" cried Caroline when, mounted upon the green brow where the forest of Montmorency commences, she perceived at her feet the immense valley which unrolled its sinuosities sown with villages, the bluish horizons of its hills, its steeples, its meadows, its fields, and the murmur of which came to expire in the young girl's ear like a sound of the sea.

The three travelers kept close to the edge of a factitious little river, and arrived at that Swiss valley, the chalet of which had received more than once Queen Hortense and Napoléon. When Caroline had seated herself with a sacred respect upon the mossy wooden bench on which had rested the

kings, the princesses and the Emperor, Madame Crochard manifested a desire to examine more closely a bridge suspended between two rocks which she perceived from a distance, and directed her steps toward this rustic curiosity, leaving her child under the guardianship of Monsieur Roger, but saying to her that she would not lose sight of them.

"Ah! what, poor little thing," cried Roger, "you have never desired fortune and the enjoyments of luxury? You have not wished sometimes to wear the beautiful dresses which you embroider?"

"I would lie to you, Monsieur Roger, if I should say to you that I do not think of the happiness which the rich enjoy. Ah! yes, I dream often, above all when I go to sleep, of the pleasure which I should have in seeing my poor mother no longer obliged at her age to go out in bad weather to get our little provisions. I would wish that in the morning a woman of the house should bring to her, while she was still in bed, her coffee well sugared with white sugar. She loves to read romances, the poor, good woman,—well, I had much rather see her use her eyes for her favorite reading instead of in moving the bobbins from morning until night. She ought also to have a little good wine. In short, I should like to know her happy, she is so good!"

"She has then proved her goodness to you?"

"Oh! yes," replied the young girl, with a depth in her voice.

Then, after a sufficiently brief moment of silence, during which the two young people looked at

Madame Crochard, who, having reached the middle of the rustic bridge, threatened them with her finger, Caroline went on:

"Oh! yes, she has proved it to me. How much care did she not bestow upon me when I was little! She sold her last silver dishes to put me to the apprenticeship with the old maid from whom I learned embroidering. And my poor father! how much trouble did she not have that he might be enabled to pass his last moments happily!"

At this recollection, the young girl shuddered, and made a veil of her two hands.

"Ah! bah! let us not think of past misfortunes," she said, endeavoring to resume her gay air.

She blushed on perceiving that Roger was moved, but she did not dare to look at him.

"What did your father do?" he asked.

"My father was a dancer at the Opéra before the Revolution," she replied, with the most natural air in the world; "and my mother sang in the choruses. My father, who directed the evolutions at the theatre, accidentally found himself at the taking of the Bastile. He was recognized by some of the assailants, who asked him if he could not direct a real attack, he who commanded the sham ones at the theatre. My father was brave, he accepted, led the insurgents, and was rewarded by the grade of captain in the army of the Sambre-et-Meuse, where he conducted himself in such a way as to rise rapidly in grade, he became colonel; but he was so badly wounded at Lutzen that he came back to die at

Paris, after a year of illness. The Bourbons came in, my mother was unable to obtain a pension, and we fell into such poverty that we were obliged to work for our living. Within a short time that good woman has become sickly; I have never seen her with so little resignation; she complains, and I can readily understand it; she has tasted the pleasures of a happy life. As for myself, who would not know how to regret delights which I have never known, I ask only one thing of Heaven—"

"What one?" Roger, who seemed to be dreaming, asked quickly.

"That the women may always wear embroidered tulle, so that the work may never fail."

The frankness of these avowals interested the young man, who regarded with a somewhat less hostile eye Madame Crochard when she returned toward them with a slow step.

"Well, my children, have you had a good gossip?" she asked them with an air at once indulgent and jesting. "When one thinks, monsieur, that the *Little Corporal* has sat there where you are!" she went on after a moment of silence. "Poor man!" she added, "my husband loved him! Ah! Crochard also did well to die, for he could not have endured to know where *they* have put him."

Roger placed his finger to his lips, and the good woman, shaking her head, said with a serious air:

"Enough, mouths shall be shut and tongues dead. But," she added, opening the edges of her corsage and showing a cross and its red ribbon hung round

her neck by a narrow black silk one, "*they* will not prevent me from wearing that which the *other* gave to my poor Crochard, and I will certainly have myself buried with—"

On hearing these words, which then passed for sedition, Roger interrupted the old mother by rising brusquely, and they returned to the village through the alleys of the park. The young man disappeared for a few moments to order a repast at the best cook's in Taverny; then he returned for the two women and conducted them thither through the forest paths. The dinner was gay. Roger was no longer that sinister shadow which formerly passed through the Rue du Tourniquet; he resembled less the *black monsieur* than a confident young man ready to abandon himself to the current of life, like these two women, taking no care and laborious, who tomorrow perhaps would be wanting bread; he appeared to be under the influence of the joys of the first age, his smile had in it something caressing and childlike. When, toward five o'clock, the cheerful dinner was ended with a few glasses of champagne, Roger was the first to propose to go to the village ball under the chestnut trees, where Caroline and he danced together; their hands conveyed a mutual intelligence by their pressure, their hearts beat, animated by the same hope; and under the blue sky, in the oblique and ruddy rays of the setting sun, their glances attained a brilliancy which for them eclipsed that of the sky. Strange power of a thought and of a desire! Nothing seemed

impossible to these two beings. In those magic moments in which pleasure throws its reflections even upon the future, the soul foresees only happiness. This charming day had already created for these two, souvenirs with which they could compare nothing in the past of their existence. Is the source then more gracious than the river, is desire more ravishing than enjoyment, and that which we hope for, more attractive than all which we possess?

"Here is the day already ended!"

At this exclamation which escaped from the unknown at the moment when the dance ceased, Caroline looked at him with a compassionate air on seeing on his countenance a slight tinge of sadness.

"Why should you not be as contented at Paris as here?" she said. "Is happiness to be found only at Saint-Leu? It seems to me now that I cannot be unhappy anywhere."

Roger trembled slightly at these words, dictated by that soft abandon which always carries women farther than they wish to go, just as prudery often gives them more cruelty than they have. For the first time since the look which had in a measure been the beginning of their friendship, Caroline and Roger had the same thought; if they did not express it, they felt it at the same moment by a mutual impression, not unlike that of a beneficent hearth which would have protected them against the rigors of the winter; then, as though they feared to be silent, they proceeded toward the spot where the carriage was waiting for them; but, before getting

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IN THE PARK OF SAINT-LEU.

*"My mother was unable to obtain a pension, and we fell into such poverty that we were obliged to work for our living. * * * As for myself, one would not know how to regret delights which I have never known, I ask only one thing of Heaven—"*

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into it, they took each other fraternally by the hand and hastened into a dusky alley before Madame Crochard. When they no longer saw the white tulle bonnet which, like a point of light amid the foliage, indicated to them the locality of the old mother:

"Caroline!" said Roger, with a troubled voice, his heart beating.

The young girl, confused, fell back some steps, comprehending the desires which this interrogation revealed; nevertheless she extended her hand, which was ardently kissed and which she quickly withdrew, for, rising on her toes, she had perceived her mother. Madame Crochard pretended to have seen nothing, as if, in recollection of her ancient rôles, she should only figure here as an "aside."

The adventure of these two young people did not continue in the Rue du Tourniquet. In order to find Caroline and Roger again, it will be necessary to transport ourselves into the midst of modern Paris, where there exist, in the houses newly built, those apartments which seem expressly arranged for newly-married couples to pass there their honeymoon: the paintings and the papers are as young there as the spouses, and the decoration is in its flower, like their love; everything is there in harmony with young ideas, with ardent desires. About the middle of the Rue Taitbout, in a house, the cut stone of which was still white, of which the columns of the vestibule and of the doorway were as yet unsoiled, and the walls of which shone with that

coquettish painting which our first relations with England had brought into fashion, there was to be found on the second floor a little apartment arranged by the architect as if he had guessed its destination. A fresh and simple antechamber, the walls faced breast-high with stucco, led into a salon and into a little dining-room. The salon communicated with a pretty bedchamber to which was attached a bathroom. The chimneys were all finished with high mirrors carefully framed. The doors had for ornaments arabesques in very good taste, and the cornices were pure in style. An amateur would have recognized there, better than elsewhere, that science of distribution and of decoration which distinguishes the works of our modern architects. Caroline had been living for about a month in this apartment, which had been furnished by oneof those upholsterers who are directed by artists. A brief description of the most important room will suffice to give an idea of the marvels which this apartment offered to the eyes of Caroline, brought hither by Roger. Hangings in a gray stuff, set off by ornaments in green silk, decorated the walls of her bedchamber. The furniture, covered with a light-colored kerseymere, presented the light and graceful forms required by the latest fashionable caprice; a commode in native wood, inlaid with brown stripes, guarded the treasures of the wardrobe; a secretary of similar make served for the writing of pretty notes on perfumed paper; the bed, draped *à l'antique*, could only inspire ideas of voluptuousness by the softness of its

elegantly arranged muslins; the curtains, of gray silk with green fringes, were always drawn in such a manner as to intercept the light; a bronze clock represented Love crowning Psyche; and finally, a carpet with Gothic designs printed upon a reddish background served to bring out the accessories of this place full of delights. Opposite a large psyche-glass was placed a little toilet table, before which the ex-embroiderer was expressing her impatience at the science of Plaisir, an illustrious hairdresser.

"Do you hope to finish my coiffure to-day?" she said.

"Madame's hair is so long and so thick!" replied Plaisir.

Caroline could not keep from smiling. The artiste's flattery had doubtless awakened in her heart the souvenir of the passionate praises addressed to her by her friend on the beauty of this hair, which he adored. When the hairdresser had departed, the femme de chambre came to hold council with her concerning the toilet which would most please Roger. They were then at the commencement of September, 1816, the weather was cold,—a dress of green grenadine trimmed with chinchilla was selected. As soon as her toilet was completed, Caroline fled into the salon, opened one of the windows which gave access to the elegant balcony which decorated the façade, and there crossed her arms in a charming attitude, not for the purpose of offering herself to the admiration of the passers-by and seeing them turn their heads toward her, but to

look down the boulevard at the end of the Rue Taitbout. This vista, which could readily be compared to the hole practised by actors in a theatre curtain, permitted her to distinguish a multitude of elegant carriages and a crowd of people carried along with the rapidity of a phantasmagoria. As she did not know whether Roger were coming on foot or in a carriage, the former workwoman of the Rue du Tourniquet examined alternately the pedestrians and the tilburies, light carriages recently imported into France by the English. Various expressions, of frowardness and of love, passed over her young face when, at the end of a quarter of an hour's waiting, neither her quick eye nor her heart had yet indicated to her him whom she knew should be coming. What scorn, what indifference were depicted on her beautiful countenance for all the creatures which swarmed like ants below her feet! Her gray eyes, sparkling with malice, blazed. All absorbed in her passion, she avoided homage with as much care as the proudest take to receive it during their promenades through Paris, and certainly concerned herself but little if the souvenir of her white face leaning over, or of her little foot which protruded through the balcony, if the piquant image of her animated eyes or of her nose voluptuously retroussé, should be effaced the next day or should not from the hearts of the passers-by who admired her; she saw only one face and had but one thought. When the spotted head of a certain brown-bay horse came in sight on this side of the high line traced in space by the walls

of the houses, Caroline trembled and lifted herself on the points of her toes, endeavoring to recognize the white reins and the color of the tilbury. It was *he!* Roger turned the angle of the street, saw the balcony, whipped up his horse, which sprang forward and arrived before that bronzed door which he knew as well as his master. The door of the apartment was opened in advance by the femme de chambre, who had heard the cry of joy uttered by her mistress. Roger precipitated himself toward the salon, pressed Caroline in his arms and embraced her with that effusion of sentiment which is always induced by the infrequent reunion of two beings who love each other; he drew her, or, rather, they walked by mutual impulse, although enlaced in each other's arms, toward that discreet and balmy chamber; a sofa received them before the fire, and they contemplated each other a moment in silence, expressing their happiness only by the quiet pressure of their hands, communicating their thoughts to each other by a long look.

"Yes, it is he," she said finally; "yes, it is you. Do you know that it has been three long days since I saw you, a century! But what is the matter with you? You are in trouble."

"My poor Caroline—"

"Oh! see now, 'my poor Caroline'—"

"No, do not laugh, my angel; we cannot go this evening to Feydeau's."

Caroline made a little pouting mouth, but it immediately disappeared.

"I am a silly! How can I think of the theatre when I see you? To see you, is not that the only theatre that I love?" she cried, passing her fingers through Roger's hair.

"I am obliged to go to see the Procureur Général, we have on hand just now a difficult affair. He met me in the grande salle; and as it is I who am the spokesman, he has engaged me to come and dine with him; but, my dear, you can go to Feydeau's with your mother, I will rejoin you there if the conference finishes early."

"Go to the theatre without you!" she cried with an expression of astonishment, "take a pleasure which you do not share!—Oh my Roger, you deserve not to be embraced," she added, throwing herself upon his neck with a movement as ingenuous as voluptuous.

"Caroline, I must return to dress. The Marais is at a distance, and I have still some affairs to attend to."

"Monsieur," replied Caroline, interrupting him, "be careful of those words! My mother has told me that when men begin to talk to us of their affairs, they no longer love us."

"Caroline, have I not come? have I not stolen this hour from my pitiless—"

"Hush!" said she, placing a finger on Roger's mouth, "hush! do you not see that I am jesting?"

At this moment they had both returned to the salon. Roger perceived there a piece of furniture that had been brought that very morning by the

cabinet-maker,—the old embroidery frame in rosewood, the productions of which had supported Caroline and her mother when they lived in the Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, had been done up anew, and a tulle robe of a rich design was already stretched upon it.

"Ah! well, my dear friend, this evening I will work. While I am embroidering, I will think that I am still in those first days when you used to pass by before me without saying a word, but not without looking at me; in those days when the remembrance of your look kept me awake during the night. O my dear embroidery frame, the most beautiful piece of furniture in my salon, although it did not come from you!—You do not know?" she said, seating herself on the knees of Roger who, unable to resist his emotions, had fallen into an armchair—"Listen to me, then! I wish to give to the poor all that I gain by my embroidery. You have made me so rich! How I love that pretty place of Bellefeuille, less for what it is than because it is you who have given it to me. But, tell me, my Roger, I should like to call myself Caroline de Bellefeuille, can I? you should know; would that be legal, or permitted?"

When she saw the little affirmative motion of Roger's mouth, inspired by his hatred for the name of Crochard, Caroline leaped for joy, clapping her hands.

"It seems to me as if I should belong to you better that way. Usually, a young girl renounces her name and takes that of her husband—"

An importunate thought, which, however, she immediately drove away, made her blush; she took Roger by the hand and led him to an open piano.

"Listen," she said. "I know my sonata now like an angel."

And her fingers were already wandering over the ivory keys when she felt herself seized and lifted by the waist.

"Caroline, I should be away from here."

"You wish to go? Well, go then," she said, pouting.

But she smiled as she looked at the clock and cried joyously:

"I have at least kept you a quarter of an hour longer."

"Adieu, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille," he said, with the gentle irony of love.

She took a kiss and conducted her Roger as far as the threshold of the door; when the sound of his footsteps was no longer heard on the stairway, she ran to the balcony to see him mounting in his tilbury, to see him take the reins, to receive a last look, to hear the rolling of the wheels on the pavement, and to follow with her eyes the shining horse, the hat of the master, the gold lace which ornamented that of the groom, finally, to look for a long time afterward at the black angle of the street which had robbed her of this vision.

Five years after the installation of Mademoiselle Caroline de Bellefeuille in the pretty house of the Rue Taitbout, there passed there, for the second

time, one of those domestic scenes which draw still closer the ties of affection between two beings who love each other. In the middle of the blue salon, before the window which opened on the balcony, a little boy of four years was making an infernal hubbub, whipping his toy horse of which the two rockers which sustained its feet did not go fast enough to please him; his pretty little countenance, around which his fair hair fell in a thousand curls on his embroidered collar, smiled like an angel's face at his mother when, from the depths of her couch, she said to him:

"Not so much noise, Charles, you will waken your little sister."

The child, filled with curiosity, immediately descended from his horse, came on the tips of his toes as if he feared to make a noise with his feet on the carpet, put the end of a finger between his little teeth, standing in one of those infantile attitudes which have so much grace only because they are entirely natural, and lifted the veil of white muslin which concealed the fresh face of a very little girl asleep on her mother's knees.

"She is asleep then, Eugénie?" he said in great surprise. "But why does she sleep when we are awake?" he added, opening his great black eyes, humid and brilliant.

"God alone knows that," replied Caroline, smiling.

The mother and the child contemplated this little maid, baptized that very morning. Caroline, now

about the age of twenty-four, presented a fully developed beauty which an unclouded happiness and constant pleasures had made to bloom. In her, the woman was completed. Delighted to fulfill the wishes of her dear Roger, she had acquired the accomplishments which she had lacked, she played the piano sufficiently well, and sang agreeably. Ignorant of the usages of a society which would have repulsed her, and into which she would not have entered even had she been welcomed by it, for the happy woman does not go out into the world, she had neither known how to assume that elegance of manners nor to acquire that conversation full of words and empty of thoughts, which holds sway in salons; but, instead, she had laboriously acquired the knowledge indispensable to a mother whose whole ambition lies in educating her children well.

Never to leave her son, to give him at every moment from the cradle those lessons which impress upon the young soul the love of the beautiful and the good, to preserve him from every evil influence, to fulfill at once the troublesome functions of the nurse and the sweet obligations of the mother, these were her only pleasures. From the very first day, this gentle and discreet creature resigned herself so entirely to not taking a step outside the enchanted sphere in which for her lay all joys, that after six years of the most tender union she knew no more of her companion than the name of Roger. Hung in her bedchamber, the engraving of Psyche coming

with her lamp to see the sleeping Cupid notwithstanding his commands, recalled to her the conditions of her happiness. During these six years, her modest desires never, by an ill-placed ambition, wearied Roger's heart, a real treasury of kindness. Never did she wish for diamonds or ornaments, and she refused the luxury of a carriage, twenty times offered to her vanity. To wait on the balcony for Roger's tilbury, to go with him to the theatre or to walk together during the fine weather in the environs of Paris, to hope, to see him, and to hope again, this was the history of her life, poor in events but rich in love.

While lulling on her knees with a song the little daughter who had arrived a few months before this day, she pleased herself by calling up her souvenirs. She dwelt most willingly on the month of September, at which period, each year, her Roger took her to Bellefeuille, there to pass those beautiful days which seem to belong to all the seasons. Nature then is as prodigal of flowers as of fruits, the evenings are tepid, the mornings are soft, and the splendor of summer often succeeds the melancholy of autumn. During the first period of her love, Caroline had attributed the evenness of soul and the gentleness of character, all the proofs of which were given to her by Roger, to the infrequency of their interviews, always desired, and to their manner of living which did not bring them constantly into each other's presence, as is the case with two married people. She remembered then

with delight how, tormented by vain fears, she had watched him with trembling during their first sojourn at this little estate of the Gâtinais,—useless espionage of love! each one of those months of happiness passed like a dream, in the bosom of a felicity which never denied itself. She had always seen on the lips of this kind being a tender smile, a smile which seemed to be the repetition of her own. Her eyes filled with tears at these pictures too vividly recalled; she thought that she did not love enough and was tempted to see, in the misfortune of her equivocal situation, a species of tax levied by fate upon her love. Finally, an invincible curiosity led her to seek, for the thousandth time, the events which could have induced a man as loving as Roger to enjoy only an illegal and clandestine happiness. She imagined a thousand romances, precisely to furnish a pretext for not admitting the real reason, long ago divined, but in which she endeavored not to believe. She rose, still keeping her sleeping infant on her arm, to go and preside in the dining-room over all the preparations for the dinner. This day was the sixth of May, 1822, the anniversary of the visit to the park of Saint-Leu, on which her life was decided; thus each year this day brought back a fête for her heart. Caroline designated the linen which was to serve for the repast and directed the arrangement of the dessert. When she had thus taken these pains for Roger in which her happiness lay, she put the baby down in her pretty cradle-bed, went to take her stand on the balcony and it was not

long before she saw the cabriolet with which her friend, now attained to a man's maturity, had replaced the elegant tilbury of their first days. After having extinguished the first fire of the caresses of Caroline and of the little frolicsome one who called him "Papa," Roger went to the cradle, contemplated his daughter's sleep, kissed her on the forehead, and drew from the pocket of his coat a long paper ruled with black lines.

"Caroline," said he, "here is the dot of Mademoiselle Eugénie de Bellefeuille."

The mother took gratefully the deed of the dot, a legal enrollment on the general list of the creditors of the State.

"Why three thousand francs of income to Eugénie, when you have given only fifteen hundred francs to Charles?"

"Charles, my angel, will be a man," he replied. "Fifteen hundred francs will suffice him. With this revenue, a courageous man is always above poverty. If, by chance, your son should be a worthless man, I do not wish that he should commit follies. If he has ambition, this modest fortune will inspire him with the taste for work. Eugénie is a woman, she must have a dot."

The father commenced to play with Charles, whose caressing demonstrations betrayed the independence and the freedom of his education. No fear established between the father and the child destroyed this charm which recompenses paternity for its obligations, and the gaiety of this little family

was as gentle as it was real. In the evening, a magic lantern displayed upon a white sheet its decoys and its mysterious pictures, to the great surprise of Charles. More than once the celestial joys of this innocent creature excited the extravagant laughter of Caroline and Roger. When, later, the little boy was put to bed, the baby, awakening, demanded her limpid nourishment. By the light of the lamp, at the corner of the fire, in this chamber of peace and of pleasure, Roger then abandoned himself to the happiness of contemplating the gentle picture which was presented to him by this infant hanging at Caroline's breast, white, fresh as a lily newly opened, and whose hair falling in innumerable brown curls, scarcely permitted her neck to be seen. The light brought out all the graces of this young mother, by multiplying upon her, around her, on her garments and on the infant, those picturesque effects produced by the combinations of shadow and light. The visage of this woman, calm and silent, appeared a thousand times sweeter than ever to Roger, who looked tenderly at those dimpled and vermilion lips from which no discordant word had ever issued. The same thought lit up the eyes of Caroline, who examined Roger sideways, slyly, to enjoy the effect she produced upon him, or to divine the future of this evening.

Roger, who comprehended the coquetry of this subtle look, said with a feigned sadness:

"It is necessary that I should go. I have a very grave affair to bring to a conclusion, and I am waited

for at my house. Duty before everything, is it not, my dearest?"

Caroline watched him with an air at once gentle and sad, but with that resignation which does not leave unknown any of the sorrow of sacrifice.

"Adieu," she said. "Go away! If you should stay an hour longer, I would not easily give you your freedom."

"My angel," he then replied, smiling, "I have three days' leave of absence, and am believed to be twenty leagues from Paris."

A few days after the anniversary of this sixth of May, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille hastened one morning to the Rue Saint-Louis, in the Marais, hoping that she might not arrive too late at a house to which she usually went every week. A message which had come to her announced that her mother, Madame Crochard, had succumbed to a complication of ailments produced in her by her catarrh and her rheumatism. Whilst the coachman of the fiacre whipped up his horses in pursuance of Caroline's pressing directions, strengthened by the promise of an ample *pourboire*, the timorous old women, among whom the widow Crochard had found her society during her last days, had introduced a priest into the clean and commodious apartment occupied by the old gossip, on the second floor of the house. Madame Crochard's servant was ignorant that the pretty demoiselle at whose house her mistress often went to dine, was her own daughter; and, one of the first, she had solicited the intervention of a

confessor, hoping that this ecclesiastic would be at least as advantageous for her as for the sick woman. Between two games of *boston*, or in walking in the Turkish garden, the old women with whom the widow Crochard gabbled all day long, had succeeded in awakening in the frozen heart of their friend some scruples concerning her past life, some thoughts of the future, some fears relative to hell, and certain hopes of pardon founded upon a sincere return to religion. On this solemn morning, three old women of the Rue Saint-François and of the Rue Vieille-du-Temple were therefore established in the salon in which Madame Crochard received them every Tuesday. Each one in her turn left her armchair to go to sit by the bedside of the poor old creature and entertain her with those false hopes with which the dying are soothed. Meanwhile, when the crisis seemed to them to be approaching, at the moment when the physician, called in the evening before, would no longer answer for the widow's life, the three old dames consulted together to decide whether it were necessary to notify Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. Françoise having been duly consulted, it was agreed that a commissionaire should set off for the Rue Taitbout to notify the young relative whose influence seemed so important to the four women; but they hoped that the Auvergnat would bring back too late this young person who received so large a portion of Madame Crochard's affection. This widow, who had evidently at least a thousand écus of income, was so tenderly looked after by the female

trio only because not one of these good friends, not even Françoise, knew of any heir. The opulence which Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille enjoyed, she to whom Madame Crochard had forbidden herself to give the sweet name of daughter, following thus the customs of the ancient Opéra, all but made legitimate the plan formed by these four women to divide the inheritance of the dying one among themselves.

Presently, that one of the three sibyls who was mounting guard over the sick woman, came to show a shaking head to the anxious couple outside, and said:

"It is time to send for Monsieur l'Abbé Fontanon. Two hours from now and she will have neither her head nor the strength to write a word."

The toothless old servant accordingly went off, and returned with a man clothed in a black redingote. A narrow forehead revealed a small mind in this priest, endowed, moreover, with a commonplace countenance; his large and pendant cheeks, his double chin, bore witness to an egotistical love of comfort; his powdered hair gave him a mawkish air as long as he did not lift his little brown eyes, starting from his head, and which would not have been out of place under the eyebrows of a Tartar.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Françoise to him, "I thank you very much for your notification; but also consider that I have taken very great care of that dear woman there."

The domestic with her dragging footsteps and her mourning countenance became silent when she saw that the door of the apartment was open, and that

the most insinuating of the three dowagers was stationed on the landing in order to be the first to speak to the confessor. When the ecclesiastic had complaisantly received the triple broadside of the honeyed and devoted discourse of the widow's friends, he took his seat at the bedside of Madame Crochard. Decency and a certain restraint compelled the three dames and the old Françoise to remain, all four, in the salon, there to assume the expressions of sorrow which only these wrinkled faces can counterfeit so perfectly.

"Ah! how unlucky it is!" said Françoise with a sigh. "Here is now the fourth mistress that I have had the grief to bury. The first one left me a hundred francs for life, the second, fifty écus, and the third, a thousand écus cash down. After thirty years of service, this is all that I possess!"

The servant made use of her right of going and coming to place herself in a little cabinet from which she could hear the priest.

"I see with pleasure," said Fontanon, "that you entertain, my daughter, pious sentiments: you wear about you a blessed relic."

Madame Crochard made an undecided movement which did not reveal her to be in the full possession of all her faculties, for she showed the imperial cross of the Legion of Honor. The ecclesiastic pushed back his chair when he saw the symbol of the Emperor; then he presently drew nearer to his penitent, who, for some moments, conversed with him in so low a tone that Françoise heard nothing.

"Curses upon me!" suddenly cried the old woman, "do not abandon me. How, Monsieur l'Abbé, you think that I shall be held responsible for my daughter's soul?"

The ecclesiastic spoke in too low a tone and the partition was too thick for Françoise to hear all.

"Alas!" cried the widow weeping, "the blackguard has left me nothing that I can dispose of. When he took my poor Caroline, he separated me from her and allotted me only three thousand francs of income, the principal of which belongs to my daughter."

"Madame has a daughter and has only a life allowance!" cried Françoise, running into the salon.

The old women looked at each other with profound astonishment. That one of them whose nose and chin on the point of meeting revealed in her a sort of superiority of hypocrisy and of shrewdness, winked her eyes, and, as soon as Françoise had turned her back, she made to her two friends a sign which indicated: "This girl is very sharp, she has already put away three inheritances." The three old women therefore remained; but the abbé presently appeared, and when he had uttered a word, the sorceresses tumbled down the stairs together after him, leaving Françoise alone with her mistress. Madame Crochard, whose sufferings increased cruelly, might ring in vain at this moment for her servant, the latter only replied by exclaiming:

"Eh! everybody is going away!—In a minute!"

The doors of the wardrobes and of the commodes

swung backward and forward as if Françoise were searching for some lost lottery ticket. At the moment when this crisis attained its height, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille arrived at her mother's bedside to pour out to her a flood of gentle words.

"Oh! my poor mother, how criminal I am! You are suffering, and I did not know it, my heart did not reveal it to me! But here I am—"

"Caroline—"

"What?"

"They have brought me a priest."

"But a doctor, then," replied Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. "Françoise, a doctor! How is it that these ladies did not send for a doctor?"

"They brought me a priest," repeated the old woman with a sigh.

"How she suffers! and not a soothing potion, nothing on her table—"

The mother made an indistinct sign, but the quick eye of Caroline understood, for she became silent that the other might speak.

"They brought me a priest—they said, to confess me. Take care of yourself, Caroline," cried the old gossip with a last effort, "the priest got from me the name of your benefactor!"

"And who was able to tell it to you, my poor mother?"

The old woman expired in endeavoring to assume a malicious air.

If Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille had been able to observe her mother's countenance, she would

have seen that which no one will see,—Death laugh.

In order to understand the interest which is concealed in the introduction to this scene, it will be necessary to forget the personages for a moment in order to follow the recital of anterior events, the last of which, however, is connected with the death of Madame Crochard. These two portions will then form one history which, by a law peculiar to Parisian life, had produced two distinct actions.

*

Near the end of November, 1805, a young advocate, of about twenty-six years of age, was descending, about three o'clock in the morning, the grand staircase of the hôtel in which resided the high chancellor of the Empire. When he arrived in the courtyard, in a ball costume, in a fine frosty air, he could not restrain a dolorous exclamation, through which pierced, however, that gaiety which seldom abandons a Frenchman, for he did not see any fiacre through the railing of the hôtel, and could not hear in the distance any of those sounds produced by the sabots or by the hoarse voices of the Parisian coachmen. From time to time, the stampings of the horses of the chief justice whom the young man had just left at Cambacérès' *bouillotte* tables, resounded through the courtyard of the hôtel, which was scarcely lighted by the lanterns of the carriage. Suddenly the young man, clapped on the shoulders in a friendly manner, turned round, recognized the chief justice and saluted him.

As the lackey let down the steps of his carriage, the former legislator of the Convention divined the embarrassment of the advocate.

"In the night all cats are gray," he said to him gaily. "The chief justice will not compromise himself by setting an advocate on his road! Above all," he added, "when that advocate is the nephew

of a former colleague, one of the luminaries of that great council of State which gave the Code Napoléon to France."

The pedestrian got into the carriage in obedience to a gesture of the supreme chief of the Imperial Justice.

"Where do you live?" asked the minister of the advocate, before the carriage door was closed by the footman who was waiting for his orders.

"Quai des Augustins, monseigneur."

The horses set off and the young man found himself in for a tête-à-tête with a minister to whom he had vainly endeavored to speak before and after the sumptuous dinner of Cambacérès, for the chief justice had evidently avoided him all the evening.

"Well, Monsieur *de* Granville, you are in a sufficiently good way."

"Why, yes, so long as I am by your Excellency's side—"

"I am not jesting," said the minister. "Your probation terminated two years ago, and your defence in the case of Ximeuse and of Hauteserre has set you up very high."

"I had thought, up to to-day, that my devotion to those unfortunate *émigrés* had injured me."

"You are very young," said the minister in a grave tone. "But," he resumed after a pause, "you have this evening pleased the high chancellor greatly. Take your place in the magistracy of the *Parquet*, we need good members. The nephew of a man in whom we, Cambacérès and I, take the

liveliest interest, should not remain an advocate through want of protection. Your uncle aided us in traversing very stormy times, and that sort of service is not forgotten."

The minister was silent for a moment.

"In a short time," he went on, "I shall have three places vacant in the inferior court for civil causes and in the Imperial Court of Paris, come to see me then and choose whichever you prefer. Up to that time, work, but do not present yourself at my hearings. In the first place, I am overwhelmed with work; then, your rivals would divine your intentions and might injure you with the 'patron.' Cambacérès and I, by not saying a word to you this evening, have protected you from the dangers of favoritism."

As the minister uttered these last words, the carriage stopped on the Quai des Augustins; the young advocate thanked his generous protector with a very sincere gratitude for the two places which he had given him, and betook himself to pounding vigorously on his own door, for the wintry wind blew keenly around the calves of his legs. Finally an old porter pulled the cord of the door, and when the advocate passed before his lodge:

"Monsieur Granville, there is a letter for you," he cried with a hoarse voice.

The young man took the letter, and endeavored, notwithstanding the cold, to read the address by the light of a pale lamp, the flame of which was on the point of expiring.

"It is from my father," he cried, taking his candle, which the porter had finally lighted.

And he ascended rapidly to his apartment to read the following letter:

"Take the mail-coach, and if you can arrive here promptly, your fortune is made. Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems has lost her sister, she is now the only daughter, and we know that she does not hate you. Madame Bontems is now able to leave her nearly forty thousand francs of income, in addition to what she will give her as a dot. I have prepared the way. Our friends will be surprised to see the former nobles allying themselves with the family Bontems. The père Bontems was a red cap of the deepest dye who acquired a great deal of national property, purchased at the lowest prices. But at first he had only some glebe meadows which will never come back; then, since you have already derogated in becoming an advocate, I do not see why we should hesitate before another concession to the present ideas. The little girl will have three hundred thousand francs, I will give you a hundred, your mother's property should be worth fifty thousand écus, or nearly so; I see you then in a position, my dear son, if you wish to throw yourself into the magistracy, to become a senator like anybody else. My brother-in-law, the councillor of State, will not do you an ill turn because of that, for instance; but, as he is not married, his inheritance will fall to you some day; if you do not become senator on your own account, you would then have the reversion of his. Therefore, you would be perched high enough to be able to watch events. Adieu, I embrace you."

The young De Granville therefore went to his bed occupied with a thousand projects, each one finer than the other. Protected by the powerful influence of the high chancellor, of the chief justice and of his

maternal uncle, one of those who had drawn up the Code, he would commence his career in an envied position, before the first court of France, and already saw himself a member of that *Parquet* from which Napoléon selected the high officials of his empire. He presented himself also with a fortune of sufficient brilliancy to aid him in maintaining his rank, for which the petty revenue of five thousand francs from an estate which came to him in his mother's inheritance, would never suffice. And, to complete his dreams of ambition with happiness, he evoked the ingenuous figure of Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems, the companion of his childish sports. While he had not yet attained the age of reason his father and mother offered no opposition to his intimacy with the pretty daughter of their country neighbor; but when, during the brief visits which his vacations enabled him to make to Bayeux, his parents, prejudiced by their pride of birth, perceived his friendship for the young girl, they forbade him to think of her. For the last ten years, therefore, Granville had been able to see only at rare intervals this one whom he had called his *little wife.* In these moments, snatched from the active surveillance of their families, they had been able only to exchange some unimportant words while passing each other in the church or in the street. Their finest days were those in which, brought together by one of those rural festivals which in Normandy are called *assemblées,* they watched each other furtively and at a distance. During his last vacations Granville had

seen Angélique twice, and the downcast countenance, the sorrowful attitude of his little wife had led him to believe that she was bending under the weight of some unknown domestic tyranny.

When he arrived, at seven o'clock in the morning, at the coach office in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, the young advocate was fortunate enough to find a place in the conveyance that departed at that hour for the city of Caen.

This *avocat stagiare*—who was going through his course—was not able to see again without deep emotion the steeples of the cathedral of Bayeux. No one hope of his life having as yet been disappointed, his heart was open to all those beautiful sentiments which agitate young souls. After the too-long and festive banquet at which his father and some friends waited for him, the impatient young man was conducted to a certain house situated in the Rue Teinture, and well known by him. His heart was beating strongly when his father, who was still known in Bayeux as the Comte de Granville, knocked loudly at a porte-cochère, the green paint on which was falling off in scales. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. A young servant maid, wearing a cotton cap, saluted the two gentlemen with an abrupt curtsy and replied that the ladies would soon return from vespers. The count and his son entered a low apartment serving as a salon, and which resembled the parlor of a convent. The ceiling in polished walnut darkened this room, around which a few chairs covered with

tapestry and some antique armchairs were symmetrically ranged. The chimney-piece, in stone, had no other ornament than a greenish glass, on each side of which projected the twisted branches of those ancient candelabra which were made about the time of the peace of Utrecht. On the woodwork in front of this chimney, the young Granville perceived an enormous crucifix of ebony and ivory inclosed in consecrated box-wood. Although lit by three windows which opened on a garden of the provinces, the symmetrical squares of which were defined by long edges of box, the apartment received so little light that there could scarcely be distinguished on the wall parallel to these windows three religious paintings, the work of skilful brushes, and purchased doubtless during the Revolution by the old Bontems who, in his quality as chief of the district, never forgot his own interests. Everything, from the carefully waxed floor to the curtains in linen, with green squares, shone with a cleanliness that was monastic. The young man's heart involuntarily contracted in this silent retreat in which Angélique lived. The habit of frequenting the brilliant salons of Paris and the distraction of its festivals, had readily effaced from the memory of Granville the dull and peaceful existence of the provinces; so that the contrast was for him so sudden that he experienced a sort of inward shudder. To come from an assemblage under the roof of Cambacérès, where life showed itself so ample, where the intelligences had such amplitude, where the

Imperial glory was so brilliantly reflected, and to fall suddenly into a circle of contracted ideas,—was not that to be transported from Italy to Greenland?

"To live here, is not to live," he said to himself while examining this Methodist's parlor.

The old count, who perceived his son's surprise, took his hand, led him before one of the windows through which still entered a little daylight, and while the servant lit the candles in the old candelabra, he endeavored to dissipate the clouds which gathered on his brow at this aspect.

"Listen, my son," he said to him, "the widow of Père Bontems is furiously devout. When the devil gets old—you know! I see that the look of this office does not agree with you. Well, here is the truth. The old woman is besieged by the priests, they have persuaded her that it is never too late to gain Heaven, and, to be more certain of securing Saint Peter and his keys, she buys them. She goes to mass every day, attends all the services, takes the communion every Sunday that God has made, and amuses herself by restoring chapels. She has given to the cathedral ever so many ornaments, albs, copes; she has bedizened the canopy with so many feathers that at the procession on the last Corpus-Christi there was such a crowd as if it were a hanging, all to see the priests magnificently arrayed and their utensils all regilded like new. Thus this house is a veritable consecrated ground. It was I who prevented the old fool giving these three pictures to the church, a Domenichino,

a Correggio and an Andrea del Sarto, which are worth a great deal of money."

"But Angélique?" said the young man quickly.

"If you do not marry her, Angélique is lost," said the count. "Our good apostles have advised her to live virgin and martyr. I have had all the trouble in the world to awaken her little heart by speaking to her of you, when I saw that she was an only daughter; but you will readily understand that, once you are married, you will take her off to Paris. There, the fêtes, marriage, the comedy and the whirl of Parisian life will soon make her forget the confessionals, the fastings, the hair-shirts and the masses with which these creatures nourish themselves exclusively."

"But the fifty thousand francs of income derived from the ecclesiastical properties, will they not come back?—"

"That is where we are," said the count with a sly air. "In consideration of the marriage, for the vanity of Madame Bontems has not been a little tickled by the idea of grafting the Bontems upon the genealogical tree of the Granvilles, the aforesaid mother gives her fortune in its entirety to the little one, reserving to herself only the usufruct. Therefore, the priesthood opposes your marriage; but I have had the banns published, everything is ready, and in a week you will be safe from the claws of the mother or of her abbés. You will possess the prettiest maid in Bayeux, a nice little gossip who will give you no fears because she has principles.

She has been mortified, as they say in their jargon, by fastings, by prayers, and," he added in a low voice, "by her mother."

A discreet knock at the door imposed silence upon the count, who thought that it announced the arrival of the two ladies. A little servant with a hurried air appeared; but, intimidated by the aspect of the two strangers, he made a sign to the nurse-girl who came with him. Clothed in a waistcoat of blue cloth with little skirts which flapped on his hips and in pantaloons striped blue and white, this boy had his hair cut close round his face,—his countenance was like that of a chorister, so strongly did it reveal that compulsory compunction which is contracted by all the inhabitants of a devout household.

"Mademoiselle Gatienne, do you know where are the books for the office of the Virgin? The ladies of the congregation of the Sacred Heart are going to walk in procession this evening in the church."

Gatienne went to get the books.

"Will it be for much longer, my little militiaman?" asked the count.

"Oh! for a half-hour at the most."

"Let us go and see it, there are some pretty women," said the father to the son. "Moreover, a visit to the cathedral will not hurt us."

The young advocate followed his father with an irresolute air.

"Of what are you thinking?" asked the count.

"I am, father, I am—that I am right."

"You have not yet said anything."

"Yes, but I have thought that you have preserved ten thousand francs of income of your former fortune, you will leave them to me at as distant a date as possible, I desire it; but, if you give me a hundred thousand francs to make a foolish marriage, you will permit me to ask of you only fifty thousand to escape a misfortune and to enjoy, while still remaining a bachelor, a fortune equal to that which would be brought me by your demoiselle Bontems."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, father. Here are the facts. The chief justice promised me, the day before yesterday, a place in the *Parquet of Paris*. Fifty thousand francs, added to what I now have and to the income from my position, will give me a revenue of twelve thousand francs. I will certainly then have chances for fortune a thousand times preferable to those furnished by an alliance as poor in happiness as it is rich in worldly goods."

"It is very easily to be seen," replied the father, smiling, "that you have not lived during the ancient régime. Have we ever been embarrassed by a wife, we others?—"

"But, father, to-day marriage has become—"

"Ah! there!" said the count, interrupting his son, "all that my old comrades of the emigration have related to me is then quite true? The Revolution has then bequeathed to us manners without any gaiety? it has infected the young people with equivocal principles? Just like my brother-in-law, the Jacobin, you will talk to me of the nation, of

public morality, of disinterestedness. Oh, *mon Dieu!* were it not for the Emperor's sisters, what would become of us!"

This ever-green old man, whom the peasants of his estates always called the Seigneur de Granville, ended his sentence as he passed in under the vaultings of the cathedral. Notwithstanding the sanctity of the place, he hummed, even while he touched the holy water, an air of the opera of *Rose et Colas*, and conducted his son along the lateral galleries of the nave, stopping at each column to examine the long lines of heads, arrayed in the body of the church like soldiers on parade. The particular office of the Sacred Heart was about to commence. The ladies connected with this congregation being placed near the choir, the count and his son directed their steps toward this portion of the nave, and leaned against one of the columns deepest in the shadow, from which they could see the entire mass of these heads which resembled a meadow spotted with flowers. Suddenly, at two steps from the young Granville, a voice, sweeter than it seemed possible for a human creature to possess, broke out, like the first nightingale which sings when the winter is passed. Although accompanied by the thousand voices of the women, and by the strains of the organ, this voice stirred his nerves as if they had been assailed by the too rich and too living notes of the musical glasses. The Parisian turned, saw a young girl whose face, owing to the inclination of her head, was entirely concealed under a large hat of

some white stuff, and concluded that only from her could come this clear melody; he thought he recognized Angélique, notwithstanding the pelisse of brown merino which enveloped her, and he touched his father's arm.

"Yes, it is she," said the count, after having looked in the direction indicated by his son.

The old seigneur pointed by a gesture to the pale countenance of an old woman whose eyes, surrounded by a deep black circle, had already perceived the strangers without, in their duplicity, having appeared to leave the book of prayers which she held. Angélique lifted her head toward the altar, as if to inhale the penetrating perfume of the incense, the clouds of which floated to the two women. By the mysterious light diffused in this sombre building by the tapers, the lamp of the nave and some candles lit around the pillars, the young man then perceived a face which made his resolution waver. A hat of white moire framed in exactly a visage of an admirable regularity, by the oval described by the ribbon of satin tied under a little dimpled chin. On a forehead, narrow but very delicate, tresses of the color of pale gold were divided into two bandeaux and fell around the cheeks like the shadow of a foliage over a tuft of flowers. The two arches of the brows were defined with that correctness which we admire in the handsome Chinese faces. The nose, almost aquiline, was marked by a rare firmness in its contours, and the two lips resembled two rosy lines traced by love

with a delicate pencil. The eyes, of pale blue, expressed candor. If Granville remarked in this visage a sort of silent rigidity, he could attribute it to the religious sentiments which then animated Angélique. The holy words of the prayer issued from between two rows of pearls, from which the cold permitted to be seen the escape, as it were, of a faint cloud of perfumes. The young man involuntarily endeavored to stoop over to respire this divine breath. This movement attracted the attention of the young girl, and her fixed look, raised toward the altar, turned upon Granville, whom the obscurity permitted her to see only indistinctly, but in whom she recognized the companion of her childhood: a memory more powerful than prayer came to give a more than mortal light to her countenance, she blushed. The advocate trembled with joy in seeing the hopes of the other life vanquished by the hopes of love, and the glory of the sanctuary eclipsed by terrestrial souvenirs; but his triumph was of short duration: Angélique lowered her veil, assumed a calm countenance, and continued her singing without the slightest emotion betraying itself in the tone of her voice. Granville found himself under the tyranny of one sole desire, and all his ideas of prudence vanished. When the service was ended, his impatience had already become so great that, without giving the two ladies time to return home alone, he went immediately to salute his little wife. A recognition, timid on both sides, took place under the porch of the cathedral, in the presence of the

worshipers. Madame Bontems trembled with pride in taking the arm of the Comte de Granville, who, obliged to offer it to her before so many people, was very little thankful to his son for an impatience so little regardful of decency. During the space of about a fortnight which elapsed between the official presentation of the young Vicomte de Granville as a suitor for the hand of Mademoiselle Bontems and the solemn day of his marriage, he went assiduously to see his friend in her sombre parlor, to which he became accustomed. His long visits had for their object to discover Angélique's character, for his prudence had happily reawakened the day after his first interview. He nearly always found his promised bride seated before a little table in mahalep wood, and occupied in marking, herself, the linen of her trousseau. Angélique was never the first to speak of religion. If the young advocate amused himself by playing with the rich rosary kept in a little green velvet bag, if he contemplated laughingly the relic which was always attached to this instrument of devotion, Angélique took the rosary softly from his hands, throwing upon him a look of entreaty, and, without saying a word, put it back in its bag, which she immediately closed. If sometimes Granville hazarded maliciously certain declamations against certain religious practices, the charming Norman listened to him, opposing only the smile of conviction.

"It is necessary to believe nothing, or to believe everything that the Church teaches," she replied.

"Would you wish to have for the mother of your children, a girl without religion? No. What man would dare to be the judge between the disbelievers and God? Well, how can I blame that which the Church admits?"

Angélique seemed animated by such a melting charity, the young advocate saw her turn upon him such penetrating looks, that he was sometimes tempted to embrace the religion of his betrothed; the profound conviction which she had of walking in the true path, reawakened in the heart of the future magistrate doubts which she endeavored to encourage. Granville then committed the enormous fault of mistaking the fascinations of desire for those of love. Angélique was so happy in reconciling the voice of her heart and that of duty by abandoning herself to an inclination that had had its origin in her childhood, that the advocate, deceived, did not know which of these two voices was the stronger. Are not young people always disposed to trust in the promises of a pretty face, to conclude as to the beauty of the soul from that of the features? An indefinable sentiment leads them to believe that the moral perfection is always in accord with the physical perfection. If religion had not permitted Angélique to give herself up to her feelings, they would very soon have been withered in her heart like a plant watered by a deadly acid. How could a beloved lover recognize a fanaticism so well concealed? This was the history of the sentiments of the young Granville during this fortnight, devoured

like a book of which the dénouement is strongly interesting. Angélique, carefully watched, seemed to him to be the sweetest of women, and he even surprised himself by sentiments of thankfulness to Madame Bontems, who, by so strongly inculcating religious principles in her, had in some sort prepared her for the trials of life. On the day chosen for the signing of the fatal contract, Madame Bontems caused her son-in-law to swear solemnly to respect the religious habits of her daughter, to give her entire liberty of conscience, to allow her to take communion, to go to church, to confession, as often as she wished, and never to interfere with the choice of her spiritual directors. At this solemn moment, Angélique looked at her betrothed with an air so pure and so candid, that Granville did not hesitate to take the required oath. A smile stirred the lips of the Abbé Fontanon, a pale man who had charge of the consciences of the household. By a slight movement of her head, Mademoiselle Bontems promised her lover never to abuse this freedom of conscience. As for the old count, he whistled, very softly, the air of *Va-t'en voir s'ils viennent*—"Go to see if they are coming!"—

After a few days given up to the *retours de noces*, so celebrated in the provinces, Granville and his wife returned to Paris, where the young advocate was called by his appointment as advocate general to the Imperial Court of the Seine. When the newly-married couple were looking for an apartment, Angélique made use of the influence which

the honeymoon gives to all wives to induce Granville to take a large apartment situated on the ground floor of a hôtel which stood at the corner of the Rue Vieille-du-Temple and the Rue Neuve-Saint-François. The principal reason for her choice was that this house was situated at a distance of two steps from the Rue d'Orléans, where there was a church, and near a little chapel in the Rue Saint-Louis.

"It is the part of a good housewife to make provisions," her husband said to her, laughing.

Angélique observed to him, very justly, that the quarter of the Marais was in the neighborhood of the Palais de Justice, and that the magistrates whom they had come to visit, lived there. A sufficiently large garden gave, for a young household, value to the apartment: children, *if Heaven sent them any*, could there find plenty of air, the courtyard was spacious, the stables were handsome. The advocate general wished to take a hôtel in the Chaussée-d'Antin, where everything is youthful and lively, where the fashions appear in all their freshness, where the population of the boulevards is elegant, from which the distances are shorter to the theatres and to find distractions; but he was obliged to yield to the coaxings of a young wife who was claiming her first favor, and, to please her, he buried himself in the Marais. Granville's functions necessitated labors all the more assiduous that they were new to him; he occupied himself, then, before all, in the furnishing of his cabinet and the arrangement of his library; he installed himself promptly then

in a room that was soon encumbered with legal documents, and left to his young wife the direction of the decoration of the house. He was the more willing to plunge Angélique into all the embarrassments of the first acquisitions of the household, that source of so many pleasures and souvenirs for young wives, that he was ashamed to deprive her of his presence oftener than was required by the laws of the honeymoon. Once fairly accustomed to his work, the advocate general allowed his wife to draw him out of his cabinet and to take him off to show him the effect of the furnishings and the decorations which he had seen previously only in detail, or by portions.

If it be true, according to the adage, that you can judge of a woman by seeing the door of her house, her apartments should reveal her mind with still more fidelity. Whether it were that Madame de Granville had given her confidence to furnishers without taste, or whether she had inscribed her own character on the multitude of articles that she had ordered, the young magistrate was surprised at the dryness and the cold solemnity which prevailed in his apartments: he could discover nothing graceful there, everything was discord, nothing relieved the eye. The spirit of rectitude and of littleness which marked the parlor at Bayeux was revived in his hôtel, under the wide ceilings hollowed in circles and decorated with those ornaments the long twisted fillets of which are in such bad taste. With the desire to find excuses for his wife, the young man returned

on his steps, and examined again the long antechamber, of the height of one floor, through which the apartment was entered. The color of the woodwork which his wife had required of the painter was too sombre, and the velvet, of very dark green, which covered the long seats, added a serious tone to this room, not very important, it is true, but which still gave an idea of the house, just as you judge of a man's mind by his first phrase. An antechamber is a species of preface which should announce everything, but promise nothing. The young deputy asked himself if his wife had really been able to select the lamp, like an antique lantern, which was placed in the middle of this naked hall, paved in white and black marble, decorated with a paper which imitated courses of stone marked here and there by patches of green moss. A rich but old barometer was hung in the middle of one of these walls, as if to make the emptiness still more strongly felt. At the aspect of this room, the young man looked at his wife, he saw her so well satisfied with the red galloon which edged the curtains of percale, so content with the barometer and with the decent statue, the ornament of a great Gothic stove, that he had not the barbaric courage to destroy such strong illusions. Instead of condemning his wife, Granville condemned himself, he accused himself of having failed in his first duty, which commanded him to direct in Paris the first steps of a young girl educated in Bayeux. From this specimen, who could not imagine the decoration of the other rooms?

What could be expected of a young woman who took fright at seeing the naked legs of a caryatide, who promptly rejected a candelabra, a candlestick, a piece of furniture, as soon as she perceived on it the nudity of an Egyptian torso? At this period, the school of David had arrived at the height of its glory, everything in France felt the effects of the correction of his design and of his love for the antique which made in some sort his painting a colored sculpture. Not one of all the inventions of the Imperial luxury obtained right of entrance to Madame de Granville's house. The immense square salon of her hôtel retained the faded white and gold which had ornamented it in the time of Louis XV., and in which the architect had been prodigal of the lozenge-shaped grilles and those insupportable festoons due to the sterile fecundity of the designers of that epoch. If at least a harmony had been obtained, if the furniture had required of the modern mahogany an affectation of the distorted forms made the fashion by the corrupted taste of Boucher, the mansion of Angélique might have offered only a pleasant contrast to those young people who live in the nineteenth century as if they belonged to the eighteenth; but a multitude of objects here produced absurd antitheses. The consoles, the clocks, the candlesticks, represented those warlike attributes which the triumphs of the Empire rendered so valuable in Paris. These Greek casques, these Roman swords crossed, the bucklers which were due to the military enthusiasm and which decorated at this time the

most pacific implements, were scarcely in accord with the delicate and prolix ornaments which had been the delight of Madame de Pompadour. Devotion induces a species of fatiguing humility which does not exclude pride. Whether it were modesty, or inclination, Madame de Granville seemed to have a horror of soft and transparent colors. Perhaps also she thought that purple and brown were suited to the dignity of the magistracy. But how could a young girl accustomed to an austere life have conceived of those voluptuous divans which inspire evil thoughts, those elegant and perfidious boudoirs in which the sins are first conceived. The poor magistrate was overwhelmed. By the tone of approbation in which he subscribed to the eulogies which his wife gave herself, she perceived that nothing pleased her husband; she manifested so much mortification at not having succeeded, that the amorous Granville saw a proof of love in this deep pain, instead of seeing in it a wound to her self-love. A young girl suddenly snatched from the mediocrity of provincial ideas, unskilful at coquetries, unused to the elegance of the Parisian life, could she have done any better? The magistrate preferred to believe that the selections of his wife had been imposed upon her by the furnishers, rather than to admit the truth to himself. If he had been less in love, he would have felt that the merchants, so prompt to divine the character of their customers, had thanked heaven for having sent them a devout young person without any taste to assist them in getting rid of articles gone

out of fashion. He therefore consoled his pretty Norman.

"Happiness, my dear Angélique, does not come to us from a piece of furniture more or less elegant; it depends upon the sweetness, the compliance and the love of a wife."

"But it is my duty to love you, and never will there be a duty that will please me more to fulfill," said Angélique softly.

Nature has planted in the heart of a woman such a desire to please, such a need of love, that, even with a devout young woman, the thoughts of the future and of salvation should give way under the first joys of Hymen. Thus, ever since the month of April, the date at which they were married, up to the beginning of the winter, the two spouses lived in a state of perfect union. Love and work have the virtue of rendering a man sufficiently indifferent to exterior things. Obliged to pass at the Palais the half of his day, called upon to debate the grave interests of men's lives or fortunes, Granville could, less than another, perceive certain things in the interior of his household. If, on Friday, his table should be meagrely supplied, if perchance he asked for, without obtaining it, a plate of meat, his wife, to whom the Gospel forbade every species of falsehood, was able nevertheless, by little tricks permitted in the interest of religion, to lay the blame of her premeditated design upon her heedlessness, or upon the bareness of the markets; she frequently justified herself at the expense of the cook,

and sometimes went so far as to scold him. At this period, the young magistrates did not observe, as to-day, the fast days, Ember-week and the eves of church festivals; thus Granville did not remark at first the periodical recurrence of these meagre repasts, which his wife, moreover, with perfidious care, took pains to render very delicate by means of teals, moor-hen, pies of fish of which the amphibious flesh or the seasoning deceived the taste. The magistrate thus lived in a very orthodox manner without knowing it and worked out his salvation incognito. On week days, he did not know whether his wife went to mass or not; on Sundays, by a condescension natural enough, he accompanied her to the church, as if to make up to her for the occasional sacrifices of vespers which she made to him; he could not at first recognize the rigidity of the religious manners of his wife. The theatres being insupportable in summer because of the heat, Granville had not even the occasion of a very successful piece to offer to take his wife to them; thus the grave question of the theatre did not come up. In short, in the first moments of a marriage which a man has been induced to take by the beauty of a young girl, it is difficult for him to show himself exacting in his pleasures. Youth is more gormandizing than dainty, and, moreover, possession alone is a charm. How can we recognize the coldness, the dignity or the reserve of a wife so long as we ascribe to her the exaltation which we feel ourselves, when we illuminate her with the fire with which we ourselves

are animated? It is necessary to have attained a certain conjugal tranquillity in order to perceive that a devout woman waits for love with her arms crossed. Granville then believed himself sufficiently happy up to the moment when a fatal event arrived to influence the destinies of his marriage.

In the month of November, 1808, the canon of the cathedral of Bayeux, who had been formerly the spiritual director of Madame Bontems and her daughter, came to Paris, brought thither by the ambition of succeeding to one of the livings of the capital, a position which he contemplated perhaps as the stepping-stone to a bishopric. In resuming his ancient empire over the lamb of his flock, he was shocked to find her already so changed by the air of Paris, and desired to bring her back to his frigid fold. Terrified by the remonstrances of the ex-canon, a man of about thirty-eight years of age, who brought into the midst of the Parisian clergy, so tolerant and so enlightened, that bitterness of the provincial catholicism, that inflexible bigotry the multiplied exigencies of which are so many bonds for timorous souls, Madame de Granville did penitence and returned to her Jansenism. It would be wearisome to paint in detail the incidents which insensibly introduced unhappiness into the midst of this household, it will suffice perhaps to relate the principal facts without arranging them scrupulously by their periods or in order. As it happened, the first misunderstanding of this young couple was sufficiently remarkable. When Granville conducted

his wife into society, she did not refuse to go to the grave reunions, to the dinners, the concerts, the receptions of those magistrates who were placed higher than her husband in the judicial hierarchy; but she was able, for some time, to make a pretence of headaches whenever it was a question of a ball. One day, Granville, grown impatient of these indispositions to order, suppressed the letter which contained the invitation to a ball at the house of a councillor of State, he deceived his wife by a verbal invitation, and, on an evening when her health was not in the least doubtful, he produced her in the midst of a magnificent fête.

"My dear," he said to her on their return, seeing a sorrowful air about her which vexed him, "your condition as a wife, the rank which you occupy in the world, and the fortune which you enjoy, impose upon you obligations which no divine law can abrogate. Are you not the glory of your husband? You should then go to a ball whenever I do, and appear there in a proper manner."

"But, my dear, what was there then in my toilet that was so unfortunate?"

"It was your air, my dear. When a young man accosts you, speaks to you, you become so solemn that a light-minded person might think that your virtue was frail. You seem to fear that a smile will compromise you. You had really the air of asking forgiveness of God for the sins which might be committed around you. The world, my dear angel, is not a convent. But, since you speak of your

toilet, I must say to you that it is also a duty for you to follow the fashions and the customs of the world."

"Would you have me show myself like those shameless women who are so décolletée as to permit indecent looks to be thrown upon their naked shoulders, on—?"

"There is a difference, my dear," said the deputy, interrupting her, "between uncovering the entire bust and giving a graceful appearance to its corsage. You wear a triple row of tulle ruching which envelops your neck up to the chin. It would seem that you had requested your dressmaker to take away all grace from the lines of your shoulders and the forms of your breast, with as much care as a coquette employs to obtain it in her dresses which suggest the most secret forms. Your bust is buried under such numberless folds that everybody laughs at your affected reserve. You would suffer if I should repeat to you the ridiculous things that have been said about you."

"Those whom these obscenities please will not be charged with the weight of our sins," replied the young wife shortly.

"You have not danced?" asked Granville.

"I will never dance," she replied.

"Supposing I should say to you that you should dance," replied the magistrate quickly. "Yes, you should follow the fashions, wear flowers in your hair, put on your diamonds. Consider, *ma belle*, that rich people, and we are such, are under obligations to

foster luxury in a State. Is it not better to encourage manufactures than scatter your money in alms by the hands of the clergy?"

"You speak as a statesman," said Angélique.

"And you as a churchman," he replied quickly.

The discussion became very sharp. Madame de Granville put into her replies, always gentle and pronounced in a tone of voice as clear as the hand-bell of a church, an obstinacy which betrayed some priestly influence. When, in claiming the rights to which she was entitled by Granville's promise, she said that her confessor had especially forbidden her to go to a ball, the magistrate endeavored to prove to her that this priest had exceeded the regulations of the Church. This dispute, odious and theological, was renewed with much more violence and sharpness on both sides when Granville wished to take his wife to the theatre. Finally the magistrate, with the sole object of demolishing the pernicious influence exercised over his wife by the ex-canon, carried the quarrel to such a length that Madame de Granville, driven to defiance, wrote to the papal court at Rome to know if a wife could, without compromising her salvation, wear décolletée gowns, go to a ball and to the theatre, to please her husband. The reply of the venerable Pius VII. was not delayed, it condemned completely the wife's resistance, and blamed the confessor. This letter, a veritable conjugal catechism, might have been dictated by the tender voice of Fénelon, whose gracefulness and gentle spirit seemed to breathe through

it. "A wife is well placed wherever her husband conducts her. If she commit sins through his orders, it will not be she who will some day have to answer for them." These two passages of the Pope's homily caused him to be accused of irreligion by Madame de Granville and her confessor. But, before the brief arrived, the deputy perceived by the strict observance of the ecclesiastical laws that his wife imposed fasting days upon him, and he ordered his servants to serve him with meats all the year round. However displeasing this order might be to his wife, Granville, to whom fat or lean mattered but little, maintained it with a virile firmness. Is not the feeblest thinking creature wounded in that which she holds the most dear when she accomplishes, at the instigation of another will than her own, something which she would have done naturally? Of all tyrannies, the one most odious is that which takes away perpetually from the soul the merit of its actions and of its thoughts: it is abdicating without having reigned. The word which is the softest to pronounce, the sentiment which is the sweetest to express, expire when we believe them ordered. Presently, the young magistrate was obliged to renounce receiving his friends, giving either balls or dinners; his household seemed enveloped in crape. A house, the mistress of which is devout, assumes an aspect peculiar to itself. The domestics, always placed under the surveillance of the wife, are chosen only among those soi-disant pious individuals who wear countenances to match. In the

same manner as the most jovial youth, enrolled among the gendarmerie, assumes the gendarme visage, so those who are given to the practices of devotion all contract a uniform character of physiognomy; the habit of lowering the eyes, of maintaining an attitude of compunction, endows them with a hypocritical livery which the impostors know perfectly how to assume. Then these devout women form a sort of republic among themselves, they all know each other; the domestics, whom they recommend to each other, are like a race apart, preserved by them after the manner of those amateurs of horseflesh who will not admit any animal in their stables the genealogy of which is not perfectly approved. The more closely the so-called impious examine a pious household, the more surely they recognize that everything about it is characterized by some undefinable ill-favor; they find in it an appearance at once of avarice or of mystery as among the usurers, and that dampness perfumed with incense which chills the atmosphere of chapels. This niggardly regularity, this poverty of ideas which is betrayed by everything, is expressed by one word only and that word is *bigotry*. In these sinister and implacable households, bigotry is depicted in the furniture, in the engravings, in the paintings; speech there is bigoted, the silence is bigoted, and the faces are bigoted. The transformation of things and men into bigotry is an inexplicable mystery, but the fact remains. Everyone may have observed that the bigots do not walk, do

not sit down, do not speak, as walk, speak and sit the people of the world; with them you are always constrained, with them you do not laugh, with them stiffness, symmetry prevail in everything, from the bonnet of the mistress of the household to her pincushion; the looks are not frank, the servants are like shadows, and the lady of the dwelling appears to be seated on a throne of ice. One morning, the poor Granville observed with sorrow and heaviness all the symptoms of bigotry in his household. There are to be met with in the world certain societies in which the same effect exists without having been produced by the same causes. Weariness and disgust trace around these unfortunate houses a circle of brass which incloses the horror of the desert and the infinitude of space. A household is not then a tomb, but something worse, a convent. In the midst of this glacial sphere the magistrate contemplated his wife without passion; he remarked, not without a sharp pain, the narrowness of ideas which was betrayed by the manner in which her hair grew on her low and slightly hollowed forehead; he perceived in the so perfect regularity of her features something fixed, rigid, which would presently render hateful to him the feigned sweetness by which he had been seduced. He foresaw that some day those thin lips would say to him when a misfortune arrived,—"It is for thy good, my friend." The visage of Madame de Granville took on a wan tint, a serious expression which killed all cheerfulness in those who

approached her. Was this change brought about by the ascetic habits of a devotion which is no more piety than avarice is economy? was it produced by the dryness inherent in bigoted souls? It would be difficult to decide: beauty without expression is perhaps an imposture. The imperturbable smile with which the young wife contracted her countenance when regarding Granville appeared to be with her a Jesuitical formula of happiness with which she thought to satisfy all the requirements of marriage; her charity wounded, her beauty without passion seemed a monstrosity to those who knew her, and the softest of her words made the hearer impatient; she did not obey sentiments, but duties. There are certain faults which, in a woman, may yield to the vigorous lessons given by experience or by a husband, but nothing can combat the tyranny of false religious ideas. An eternal happiness to be gained, when put in the balance with a worldly pleasure, triumphs over everything and makes everything supportable. Is it not selfishness deified, the *I* beyond the tomb? Thus the Pope himself was condemned by the tribunal of the infallible canon and the young *dévote*. Not to be in the wrong is one of the sentiments which replace all others in these despotic souls. For some time there had been established a secret conflict between the ideas of husband and wife, and the young magistrate soon wearied of a contest which would never cease. What man, what character will resist the sight of a visage lovingly hypocritical, and a categorical

remonstrance opposed to the slightest wish? What position to take against a wife who makes use of your passion to protect her own insensibility, who seems to remain sweetly inexorable, prepares herself to play the part of a victim with delight, and looks upon her husband as an instrument in the hands of God, as an evil the flagellations of which will spare her those of purgatory? Where are the paintings by which can be given any idea of these women who cause virtue to be hated by outraging the sweetest precepts of a religion which Saint John summed up in "Love one another." Was there to be found in the shops a single bonnet condemned to remain on the shelves or to be shipped off to the colonies, Granville was sure to see his wife put it on; if there was manufactured any stuff of a color or a design particularly unhappy, she appeared in it. These poor *dévotes* are distracting in their toilets. The want of taste is one of the defects which are inseparable from false devotion. Thus, in that intimate existence which wishes the most expansion, Granville was without a companion: he went alone into society, to the fêtes, to the theatre. Nothing in his own house was in sympathy with him. A great crucifix placed between his wife's bed and his own was there like the symbol of his destiny. Did it not represent a Divinity done to death, a man-God killed in all the beauty of life and of youth? The ivory of that cross was less cold than Angélique crucifying her husband in the name of virtue. It was between their two beds that their

unhappiness was born; this young wife saw there only a duty in the pleasures of Hymen. There, on an Ash Wednesday, arose the observance of fasts, a pale and livid figure which in peremptory tones commanded a complete Lent, without Granville's thinking it worth while this time to write to the Pope, in order to have the advice of the consistory on the manner of observing Lent, Ember-days and the eves of the great festivals of the church. The young magistrate's unhappiness was immense; he could not even complain,—what had he to say? He possessed a wife young, pretty, faithful to her duties, virtuous, the model of all the virtues! every year she was delivered of an infant, which she nursed herself and brought up in the best principles. The charitable Angélique was promoted angel. The old women who composed the society in the midst of which she lived, for at this period the young women had not yet conceived the idea of adopting the tone of this high devotion, all admired the devotedness of Madame de Granville, and regarded her, if not as a virgin, at least as a martyr. They accused, not the scruples of the wife, but the procreating barbarity of the husband. By degrees Granville, overwhelmed with work, separated from all pleasure and wearied with the world in which he wandered solitary, fell toward his thirty-second year into a most terrible marasmus. Life to him was odious. As he had too high an idea of the obligations imposed upon him by his position to set the example of an irregular life, he undertook to dull

himself by hard work, and occupied himself with a great treatise on law. But he did not long enjoy that monastic tranquillity upon which he counted.

When the divine Angélique saw him deserting the worldly festivals and working in his own apartments with a sort of regularity, she undertook to convert him. It was a veritable grief for her to know that her husband held opinions so little Christian; she wept sometimes in thinking that if he should chance to die, he would perish in final impenitence, without her ever being able to hope to snatch him from the eternal flames of hell. Granville then became the object of the little ideas, the empty reasonings, the narrow thoughts, by means of which his wife, who thought to have won a first victory, wished to endeavor to obtain a second by bringing him into the bosom of the Church. This was the last stroke. What could be more afflicting than those dull contests in which the narrow obstinacy of the devout endeavored to overcome the dialectics of a magistrate? What more frightful to depict than those keen little prickings to which the passionate prefer stabs with a poignard? Granville deserted his house, in which everything became insupportable to him; his children, crushed under the cold despotism of their mother, did not dare to follow their father to the theatre, and Granville could not procure them any pleasure without drawing upon them the punishments of their terrible mother. This man, so loving by nature, had been brought to an indifference, to an egotism worse than

death. He at least saved his sons from this hell by sending them to college at an early age, and by reserving to himself the right of directing them. He intervened but rarely between the mother and the daughters; but he resolved to marry them as soon as they had attained the nubile age. If he had wished to take a violent stand, he would have had no justification; his wife, supported by a formidable array of dowagers, would have had him condemned by the entire earth. Granville then had no other resource than to live in a complete isolation; but, bowed under the tyranny of unhappiness, his features, worn by grief and by labor, became displeasing to himself. Finally, his liaisons, his connection with women of the world, from whom he despaired of finding any consolation—he grew to dread these, too.

The didactic history of this melancholy household did not offer, during the fifteen years which elapsed between 1806 and 1821, any scene worthy of being reported. Madame de Granville remained exactly the same from the moment she lost her husband's heart as during the years in which she called herself happy. She undertook neuvaines in which to pray God and the saints to enlighten her as to the faults which were displeasing to her husband and to inform her as to the means of bringing back the strayed sheep to the fold; but the more fervent her prayers, the less Granville appeared in the house. For the last five years or so, the advocate general, to whom the Restoration accorded very high functions in the

magistracy, had dwelt on the ground floor of his hôtel in order to avoid living with the Comtesse de Granville. Every morning there took place a scene which, if we may believe the slanders of the world, is repeated in more than one household where it is produced by certain incompatibilities of temper, by moral or physical maladies, or by irregularities which conduct very many marriages to the misfortunes depicted in this history. About eight o'clock in the morning, a femme de chambre, with a sufficient resemblance to an inmate of a convent, came to ring at the apartment of the Comte de Granville. When admitted into the salon which led into the magistrate's cabinet, she repeated to the valet de chambre, and always in the same tone, the message of the day before:

"Madame wishes to ask of Monsieur le Comte if he has passed the night comfortably, and if she shall have the pleasure of breakfasting with him."

"Monsieur," replied the valet de chambre, after having spoken to his master, "presents his homages to Madame la Comtesse, and entreats her to accept his excuses; an important affair obliges him to attend at the Palais."

A moment later, the femme de chambre presented herself again and asked on the part of madame if she could have the happiness of seeing Monsieur le Comte before his departure.

"He has gone," replied the valet, often while the cabriolet was still in the courtyard.

This dialogue by ambassadors became a daily

ceremonial. Granville's valet de chambre, who, favored by his master, had caused more than one quarrel in the household by his irreligion and by the laxity of his manners, sometimes gravely transported himself into the cabinet where his master was not, and returned to make the customary responses. The afflicted spouse was always on the lookout for the return of her husband, stationed herself on the perron to intercept him on his passage, and to appear before him like a remorse. The punctilious troublesomeness which animates the monastic characters was at the bottom of that of Madame de Granville who, then at the age of only thirty-five, appeared to be forty. When, obliged by decorum, Granville spoke to his wife or remained in his house to dinner, happy at imposing her presence upon him, her sweetly-sharp discourse and the insupportable weariness of her bigoted society, she then endeavored to put him in the wrong before her servants and her charitable friends. The presidency of one of the royal courts was offered to the Comte de Granville, at that moment in very good standing at Court; he entreated the minister to allow him to remain in Paris. This refusal, the reasons for which were known only to the guardian of the seals, suggested the most grotesque conjectures to the intimate friends and to the confessor of the countess. Granville, with a fortune of a hundred thousand francs of income, belonged to one of the best houses of Normandy; his nomination to a presidency was a step for reaching the peerage; whence

came this lack of ambition? what had caused the abandonment of his great work on the law? what had occasioned this dissipation which for nearly six years had rendered him a stranger in his own house, to his family, to his functions, to everything which should be dear to him? The confessor of the countess, who, to attain his bishopric, counted as much upon the support of the houses over which he presided as on the services rendered to a congregation of which he was one of the most ardent propagators, was disappointed by the refusal of Granville and endeavored to calumniate him by suppositions:—"If Monsieur le Comte entertained so much repugnance for the provinces, perhaps it was because he was dismayed at the necessity which he would there be under of leading a regular life? Obliged to set a moral example, he would live with the countess, from whom an illicit passion alone could separate him. Would a wife as pure as Madame de Granville ever be able to recognize the disorders which had arisen in her husband's conduct?—" Her good friends transformed into truths these words, which unfortunately were not hypotheses, and Madame de Granville was struck as if by a thunderbolt.

Without any ideas of the manners of the great world, ignorant of love and its follies, Angélique was so far from thinking that marriage could be compatible with incidents different from those that had alienated Granville's heart from her, that she believed him incapable of faults which for all women are crimes. When the count ceased to claim

anything from her, she had imagined that the calm which he appeared to enjoy was in the course of nature; finally, as she had given him all that her heart could contain of affection for a man, and as the conjectures of her confessor ruined completely the illusions with which she had nourished herself up to this moment, she took up her husband's defence, but without being able to destroy the suspicion so skilfully slipped into her soul. These apprehensions caused such ravages in her feeble head that she fell ill and became the prey of a slow fever. All this took place during Lent in the year 1822, she would not consent to relax her austerities and gradually arrived at a consumption which endangered her life. The indifferent looks of Granville were killing her. The cares and attentions of the magistrate resembled those which a nephew forces himself to be prodigal of for an old uncle. Although the countess had renounced her system of agitating and of remonstrances, and although she endeavored to welcome her husband with soft speeches, the sharpness of the *dévote* would come through, and often destroyed by one word the labor of a week.

About the end of the month of May, the warm breath of spring and a regimen somewhat more nourishing than that of Lent, restored some of her strength to Madame de Granville. One morning, on her return from mass, she came to seat herself in her little garden on a stone bench where the caresses of the sun recalled to her the first days of

her marriage; she looked back over her whole life to discover in what she had failed as to her duties as mother and wife. The Abbé Fontanon suddenly appeared in a state of agitation difficult to describe.

"Has some misfortune come to you, my father?" she asked him with a filial solicitude.

"Ah! I could wish," replied the Norman priest, "that all the misfortunes with which the hand of God afflicts you were deputed to me; but, my worthy friend, there are trials to which it is necessary to know how to submit yourself."

"Oh! can there be for me chastisements greater than those with which Providence overwhelms me by employing my husband as an instrument of wrath?"

"Prepare yourself, my daughter, for a still greater evil than that which we formerly supposed with your pious friends."

"I should then thank God," replied the countess, "that He has deigned to make use of you to transmit to me His will, placing thus, as always, the treasures of His mercy after the scourge of His anger, as formerly, in banishing Hagar, He discovered to her a spring in the desert."

"He has measured your trials by the strength of your resignation and by the weight of your faults."

"Speak, I am ready to hear all."

With these words the countess lifted her eyes to heaven and added:

"Speak, Monsieur Fontanon."

"For the last seven years, Monsieur Granville has

been committing the sin of adultery with a concubine by whom he has had two children, and he has squandered for this adulterous household more than five hundred thousand francs which should have belonged to his legitimate family."

"I must see them with my own eyes," said the countess.

"Be very careful to do no such thing," cried the abbé. "You should pardon, my daughter, and wait in prayer for God to enlighten your husband, at least to employ against him the means which are offered you by human laws."

The long conversation which the Abbé Fontanon then had with his penitent produced a violent change in the countess; she dismissed him, showed to her domestics a face almost with color in it and terrified them by her disordered activity; she ordered her carriage, countermanded it, changed her mind twenty times in the same hour; but finally, as if she had taken a great resolution, she went off about three o'clock, leaving her household all in astonishment at so sudden a revolution.

"Will monsieur return to dinner?" she had asked of the valet de chambre, to whom she never spoke.

"No, madame."

"Did you drive him to the Palais this morning?"

"Yes, madame."

"Is not to-day Monday?"

"Yes, madame."

"The Palais is open then on Monday?"

"May the devil fly away with you!" said the

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AT MADEMOISELLE DE BELLEFEUILLE'S.

"*Caroline * * * If he should undertake to trouble our happiness, I would know what course to take—*"

"*What would you do?*"

"*We would go to Italy, I would fly—*"

A cry, uttered in the adjoining salon, suddenly caused Roger to shiver and Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille to tremble, and they both rushed into the salon there to find the countess in a faint.

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valet, as he saw his mistress depart, and she gave to the coachman the order, "Rue Taitbout."

Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille was weeping; near her, Roger, holding one of the hands of his friend between his own, kept silence, and looked alternately at the little Charles, who, comprehending nothing of his mother's grief, remained mute at seeing her weep, and at the cradle in which Eugénie was sleeping, and at the face of Caroline on which the sorrow resembled rain falling through the rays of a joyous sun.

"Well, yes, my angel," said Roger after a long silence, "that is the great secret, I am married. But one day, I hope, we shall make but one family. My wife has been, since the month of March, in a hopeless illness; I do not wish her death; but, if it should please God to call her to Him, I think she will be happier in Paradise than in a world of which neither the pains nor the pleasures affect her."

"How I hate that woman! How has she been able to render you unhappy? However, it is to that unhappiness that I owe my felicity."

Her tears were suddenly dried.

"Caroline, let us hope," cried Roger, taking a kiss. "Do not be frightened at what that abbé can say. Although my wife's confessor is a redoubtable man through his influence in the congregation, if he should undertake to trouble our happiness, I would know what course to take—"

"What would you do?"

"We would go to Italy, I would fly—"

A cry, uttered in the adjoining salon, suddenly caused Roger to shiver and Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille to tremble, and they both rushed into the salon there to find the countess in a faint. When Madame de Granville had recovered consciousness, she uttered a profound sigh at seeing herself between the count and her rival, and she repulsed the latter with an involuntary gesture full of contempt.

Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille rose to withdraw.

"You are in your own house, madame, remain here," said Granville, arresting Caroline by the arm.

The magistrate seized his swooning wife, carried her to her carriage and entered it with her.

"Who then has brought you to the point of desiring my death? of fleeing from me?" asked the countess in a feeble voice and looking at her husband with as much indignation as sorrow. "Was I not young? You thought me beautiful. What have you to reproach me with? Have I deceived you? have I not been a discreet and virtuous wife? My heart has preserved only your image, my ears have heard only your voice. In what duty have I failed? what have I refused you?"

"Happiness!" replied the count in a firm voice. "As you know, madame, there are two ways of serving God. Certain Christians imagine that by going to church at fixed hours there to say *Pater Nosters*, by hearing mass regularly and by abstaining from all sin, they will gain heaven; those persons, madame, end in hell, they have not loved God for

Himself, they have not adored Him as He wishes to be, they have made no sacrifice to Him. Although gentle in appearance, they are hard to their neighbor; they live by the rule, the letter and not the spirit. This is how you have acted with your earthly spouse. You have sacrificed my happiness to your salvation; you were always in prayer when I came to you with a joyous heart, you wept when you should have lightened my labors, you have not thought it worth while to satisfy a single requirement of my pleasures."

"And, if they were criminal," cried the countess with fire, "was it then necessary to sacrifice my soul to please you?"

"It would have been a sacrifice that another, more loving than you, has had the courage to make for me," said Granville coldly.

"O my God," she cried weeping, "Thou hearest him! Was he worthy of the prayers and the austerities in the midst of which I have consumed myself in order to redeem his faults and my own? Of what use is virtue?"

"To gain heaven, my dear. One can not be at the same time the spouse of a man and of Jesus Christ; it would be bigamy; you must make your choice between a husband and a convent. You have stripped your soul, for the sake of the future, of all the love, of all the devotion which God has commanded you to have for me, and you have kept for this world only sentiments of hatred—"

"Have I not then loved you?"

"No, madame."

"What then is love?" asked the countess involuntarily.

"Love, my dear," replied Granville with a sort of ironical surprise, "you are not in a condition to comprehend it. The cold sky of Normandy cannot be that of Spain. The question of climates is undoubtedly the secret of our unhappiness. To yield to our caprices, to divine them in advance, to find pleasures in a misfortune, to sacrifice to us the opinion of the world, self-love, religion even, and to regard these offerings only as grains of incense burned in honor of the idol, that is love—"

"The love of opera dancers," said the countess in horror. "Such fires as those should be but little durable, and leave you very soon only cinders or coal, regrets or despairs. A wife, monsieur, should offer you, it seems to me, a true friendship, an equal warmth, and—"

"You speak of a warmth as the negroes speak of ice," interrupted the count with a sardonic smile. "Reflect that the most humble of all the daisies is more charming than the proudest and most brilliant of the thorn-roses which attract us in springtime by their penetrating perfumes and their vivid colors. However," he added, "I will do you justice. You have kept yourself so strictly in the line of apparent duty prescribed by the law, that, in order to demonstrate to you that in which you have failed in your duty toward me, it would be necessary to enter into certain details which your dignity would not permit

you to consider, and to instruct you in things which would seem to you the overthrow of all morality."

"You dare to speak of morality in issuing from the house in which you have dissipated the fortune of your children, in a place of debauchery!" cried the countess, whom the reticence of her husband rendered furious.

"Madame, I must stop you there," said the count coolly, interrupting his wife. "If Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille is rich, she is not so at the expense of any other person. My uncle was master of his own fortune, he had several heirs; during his life and through pure friendship for her whom he looked upon as his niece, he gave her his estate of Bellefeuille. As for the rest, I hold it from his liberality—"

"Such conduct is worthy of a Jacobin!" cried the pious Angélique.

"Madame, you forget that your father was one of those Jacobins whom you, a woman, condemn with so little charity," said the count with severity. "The citizen Bontems was signing death warrants at the period when my uncle was rendering naught but services to France."

Madame de Granville did not reply. But, after a moment of silence, the remembrance of that which she had just seen reawakening in her soul a jealousy which nothing can extinguish in a woman's heart, she said in a low voice, and as if she were speaking to herself:

"How can anyone thus risk his own soul and the souls of others!"

"Eh! madame," replied the count, wearied of this conversation, "perhaps it will be you who one day will have to answer for all this."

This speech made the countess tremble.

"You will doubtless be excused in the eyes of the indulgent Judge who will weigh our faults," said he, "because of the sincerity with which you have accomplished my unhappiness. I do not hate you at all, I hate those who have perverted your heart and your reason. You have prayed for me, as Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has given me her heart and surrounded me with love. You should have been alternately my mistress and the saint praying at the foot of the altar. Do me the justice to admit that I am neither perverse nor debauched. My habits are pure. Alas! at the end of seven years of sorrows, the necessity of happiness conducted me down an insensible slope to loving another woman than you, to creating for myself another family than my own. Do not think, moreover, that I am the only one; there exist in this city thousands of husbands who have been led by different causes to this double existence."

"*Grand Dieu!*" cried the countess, "how heavy my cross has become! If the spouse whom in Thy anger Thou hast imposed upon me can find no happiness here below, except by my death, recall me to Thy bosom."

"If you had always had such admirable sentiments and this devotion, we should still be happy," said the count coldly.

"Well," replied Angélique, shedding a torrent of tears, "forgive me if I have committed faults! Yes, monsieur, I am ready to obey you in all things, certain that you will desire nothing that is not just and natural: I will be, henceforward, all that you could wish a wife to be."

"Madame, if your intention is to make me say that I no longer love you, I shall have the terrible courage to enlighten you. Can I command my heart? can I efface in a moment the souvenirs of fifteen years of sorrow? I no longer love you. These words enclose a mystery quite as profound as that which is contained in the phrase, 'I love.' Esteem, consideration, regard, may be obtained, disappear, return; but, as to love, I might preach to myself for a thousand years, I could not make it be born again, above all for a woman who has wilfully aged herself."

"Ah! Monsieur le Comte, I desire very sincerely that these words shall not be uttered to you some day by her whom you love, with the tone and the accent which you give to them—"

"Will you put on, this evening, a dress *à la Grecque* and accompany me to the Opéra?"

The shudder which this demand suddenly caused the countess was a mute reply.

In the first days of the month of December, 1833, a man whose countenance and whose entirely white hair seemed to indicate that he had aged rather by grief than by years, for he appeared to be about

sixty, passed at midnight through the Rue Gaillon. When he arrived before a house of an unassuming appearance, and three stories in height, he stopped to look at one of the three windows placed at equal distances in the mansard roof. A feeble light scarcely illumined this humble casement, some of the panes of which had been replaced by paper. The pedestrian was looking at this vacillating light with the undefinable curiosity of the Parisian idlers when a young man suddenly came out of the house. As the feeble rays of the street lamp fell upon the face of the curious observer, it will not be considered surprising that, notwithstanding the night, the young man advanced toward the other with those precautions customary in Paris when you are afraid of being deceived in recognizing an acquaintance.

"What!" he cried, "it is you, Monsieur le Président, alone, on foot, at this hour, and so far from the Rue Saint-Lazare! Permit me to have the honor of offering you my arm. The pavement, this morning, is so slippery that if we do not support each other," he said, that he might not offend the old man, "it would be difficult for us to avoid a fall."

"But, my dear monsieur, I am as yet only fifty-five, unfortunately for me," replied the Comte de Granville. "A physician as celebrated as you are should know that at that age a man still has all his vigor."

"You are then very fortunate," replied Horace Bianchon. "You are not in the habit, I think, of

going on foot about Paris. When one has horses as fine as yours—"

"But the greater part of the time," replied the Comte de Granville, "when I do not go out in society, I return from the Palais-Royal or from the club des Étrangers on foot."

"And carrying about you, doubtless, large sums of money," cried the doctor. "Is not that to invite the assassin's dagger?"

"I am not afraid of that," replied the Comte de Granville with an indifferent and mournful air.

"But at least you need not stop," replied the physician, drawing the magistrate toward the boulevard. "But a little more, and I should think that you wished to steal your last sickness from me and to die by another hand than mine."

"Ah! you have surprised me playing the spy," replied the count. "Whether I pass on foot or in a carriage, and at whatever hour of the night it may be, I have noticed for some time at a window on the third floor of the house from which you came out, the shadow of a person who seems to be working with an heroic courage."

At these words the count made a sudden pause, as if he had felt an unexpected pain.

"I have taken in this garret," he said continuing, "as great an interest as a bourgeois of Paris can take in the completion of the Palais-Royal."

"Well," cried Horace quickly, interrupting the count, "I can give you—"

"Tell me nothing," replied Granville, cutting

short the doctor's speech. "I would not give a centime to know whether the shadow which falls on those curtains full of holes is that of a man or a woman, and whether the inhabitant of that garret is happy or unhappy! If I have been surprised to no longer see any one working this evening, if I stopped, it was solely to have the pleasure of forming conjectures as numerous and as senseless as those which the idlers conceive at the aspect of a building suddenly abandoned. For the last nine years, my young—"

The count seemed to hesitate to employ an expression, but he made a gesture and exclaimed:

"No, I will not call you my friend, I detest everything which resembles sentiment. For the last nine years, then, I have no longer been surprised that old men please themselves by cultivating flowers, by planting trees; the events of life have taught them to believe no more in human affections; and within a few days I have become an old man. I no longer wish to become attached to anything but animals, which do not reason, to plants, to anything which is outward. I attach more importance to the movements of Taglioni than to all the human sentiments. I abhor life, and a world in which I am alone. Nothing, nothing," added the count with an expression which made the young man shudder, "no, nothing moves me and nothing interests me."

"You have children."

"My children!" he replied with a singular accent of bitterness. "Well, the elder of my two

daughters, is she not Comtesse de Vandenesse? As to the other, the marriage of her elder sister prepares for her a fine alliance. As to my two sons, have they not succeeded brilliantly? the viscount, from procureur général at Limoges has become first president at Orléans, and the younger is procureur du roi. My children have their own cares, their anxieties, their affairs. If, among these hearts, there had been one which was entirely devoted to me, if it had endeavored by its affection to fill the void which I feel there," he said, striking his breast, "well, that one would have missed its own life, it would have sacrificed it to me. And for what, after all? to cheer the few years that remain to me? would it have succeeded? would I not perhaps have considered its generous cares as a debt? But—"

Here the old man began to smile with a profound irony.

"But, doctor, it is not in vain that we teach them arithmetic, and they know how to calculate. At this moment, perhaps, they are waiting for my estate."

"Oh! Monsieur le Comte, how can you have such an idea, you, so good, so considerate, so humane? In very truth, if I were not, myself, a living proof of that benevolence which you comprehend in so fine and so large a—"

"For my own pleasure," replied the count quickly. "I pay for a sensation as I would pay tomorrow a heap of gold for the most puerile of the

illusions which moves my heart. I help my kind for myself, for the same reason that I go to play; therefore I count on the gratitude of no one. You, yourself, I would see you die without emotion, and I ask of you the same sentiments toward myself. Ah! young man, the events of life have passed over my heart like the lava of Vesuvius over Herculaneum; the city exists—dead."

"Those who have brought to this degree of insensibility a heart as warm and as living as was yours, are indeed culpable."

"Do not add a word," replied the count with a sentiment of horror.

"You have a malady which you should permit me to cure," said Bianchon in a voice full of emotion.

"But are you then acquainted with a remedy for death?" cried the count impatiently.

"Well, Monsieur le Comte, I will engage to reanimate that heart which you deem so cold."

"Are you the equal of Talma?" asked the first president ironically.

"No, Monsieur le Comte. But nature is as superior to Talma as Talma may be superior to me. Listen, the garret which interests you is inhabited by a woman of about thirty years of age, with her, love mounts to fanaticism; the object of her worship is a young man with a handsome face but whom an evil fairy has endowed with all the vices possible. This youth is a gambler, and I do not know which he loves more, women or wine; he has committed, to my knowledge, deeds worthy of the correctional

police. Well, this unhappy woman has sacrificed for him a very happy existence, a man by whom she was adored, by whom she has had children— But what ails you, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Nothing; continue."

"She has allowed him to devour an entire fortune, she would give him, I believe, the world if she owned it; she works night and day; and she has often seen, without a murmur, this monster whom she adores wrest from her even the money destined to pay for the clothes of which her children are in need, even to their food for the morrow. Only three days ago, she sold her hair, the most beautiful I ever saw; he came, she was not able to hide quickly enough the gold piece, he demanded it; for a smile, for a caress, she yielded up the price of two weeks of life and of peace. Is it not at once horrible and sublime? But toil is beginning to hollow her cheeks. The cries of her children have distracted her soul, she has fallen ill, she is moaning at this moment on her wretched bed. This evening she had nothing to eat, and her children had no longer the strength to cry, they were silent when I arrived."

Horace Bianchon stopped. At that moment the Comte de Granville had, as if in spite of himself, thrust his hand into his waistcoat pocket.

"I understand, my young friend," said the old man, "how she can still be living, if you take care of her."

"Ah! the poor creature," cried the physician,

"who would not help her? I should like to be richer, for I hope to cure her of her love."

"But," replied the count, withdrawing from his pocket the hand which he had put there without the doctor seeing it, and full of bank notes which seemed to have been sought there, "how can you expect me to be moved to pity over a misery the pleasures of which would not seem to me to be purchased too dearly by the sacrifice of all my fortune! She feels, she lives, this woman. Would not Louis XV. have given all his kingdom to have been able to rise from his coffin and to have had three days of youth and of life? Is not that the history of a billion of dead men, of a billion of sick men, of a billion of old men?"

"Poor Caroline!" sighed the doctor.

On hearing this name the Comte de Granville shuddered, and seized the arm of the physician, who thought he felt himself grasped in the two iron jaws of a vice.

"Her name is Caroline Crochard?" asked the president in a voice that was visibly altered.

"You know her then?" replied the doctor in astonishment.

"And the wretch's name is Solvet—Ah! you have kept your word," cried the president, "you have agitated my heart by the most terrible sensation that it will ever experience until it becomes dust. This emotion is still another present from hell, and I shall always know how to pay my debts to it."

At this moment the count and the doctor had

arrived at the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin. One of those wanderers of the night who, carrying on the back a willow basket and walking with a hook in the hand, were jokingly called, during the Revolution, members of the committee of investigation, happened to be near the curbstone by which the president stopped. This rag-picker had an old face, worthy of those which Charlet has immortalized in his caricatures of the school of street-sweepers.

"Do you often find thousand-franc notes?" asked the count of him.

"Sometimes, my bourgeois."

"And do you return them?"

"That is according to the reward offered."

"See here, my man," said the count, presenting to the rag-picker a note of a thousand francs. "Take this," he said to him, "but remember that I give it to you on the condition that you spend it at the tavern, that you get drunk, that you quarrel, that you beat your wife, that you blacken the eyes of your friends. That will set on foot the guard, the surgeons, the druggists; perhaps the gendarmes, the procureurs du roi, the judges and the jailers. You must change nothing in this programme, or the devil will know how, sooner or later, to get even with you."

It would be necessary for a man to possess at once the pencils of Charlet and those of Callot, the brushes of Teniers and of Rembrandt, to give an exact idea of this nocturnal scene.

"There is my account closed with hell, and I have had satisfaction for my money," said the count in the deepest tones of his voice and indicating to the stupefied physician the indescribable countenance of the open-mouthed rag-picker. "As to Caroline Crochard," he went on, "she may die in the horrors of hunger and thirst, with the heartrending cries of her dying sons in her ears, recognizing the baseness of him whom she loves,—I would not give a farthing to prevent her suffering, and I do not wish to see you again for that only that you have helped her—"

The count left Bianchon more motionless than a statue, and disappeared, directing his steps with all a young man's precipitancy toward the Rue Saint-Lazare, where he quickly reached the little hôtel which he inhabited and at the door of which he saw, not without surprise, a carriage standing.

"Monsieur le Procureur du Roi," said the valet de chambre to his master, "arrived an hour ago to speak to monsieur, and he is waiting for him in his bedchamber."

Granville made a sign to his domestic to retire.

"What motive has been of sufficient importance to oblige you to disregard the order that I have given to my children not to come to see me unless sent for?" said the old man to his son as he entered.

"Father," replied the magistrate in a trembling voice and with a respectful air, "I venture to hope that you will forgive me when you have heard me."

"Your reply is reasonable," said the count.

"Take a seat." He indicated a chair to the young man. "But," he went on, "whether I walk about or whether I sit down, pay no attention to me."

"Father," resumed the baron, "this afternoon at four o'clock a very young man, arrested in the house of one of my friends whom he had robbed of a very considerable amount, claimed your protection, asserting that he is your son.

"What is his name?" asked the count, trembling.

"Charles Crochard."

"That is enough," said the father, making an imperative gesture.

Granville walked up and down the chamber in the midst of a profound silence, which his son was very careful not to interrupt.

"My son,"—these words were pronounced in a tone so gentle and so paternal that the young magistrate thrilled with them—"Charles Crochard has told you the truth. I am pleased that you have come this evening, my good Eugène," added the old man. "Here is a sum of money sufficiently large," he said, presenting him with a large roll of bank notes, "you will make whatever use of them you think proper in this affair. I trust in you, and I approve, in advance, of all your arrangements, whether for the present or for the future. Eugène, my dear son, come and embrace me, we see each other perhaps for the last time. To-morrow I shall ask of the king leave of absence, I shall set out for Italy. If a father owes no account of his life to his children, he should bequeath to them the experience

which destiny has sold to him; is it not a part of their inheritance? When you marry," resumed the count, shuddering involuntarily, "do not lightly undertake this act, the most important of all those to which society compels us. Remember to study long and carefully the character of the woman with whom you propose to unite your destiny; but consult me, too, I wish to judge her myself. A want of union between two married people, by whatever cause it may be produced, brings about frightful evils. We are, sooner or later, punished for not having obeyed the social laws. I will write to you from Florence on this subject; a father, above all, when he has the honor to preside over a supreme court, should not blush before his son. Adieu."

Paris, February, 1830—January, 1842.

THE PEACE OF THE HOUSEHOLD

TO MY DEAR NIECE, VALENTINE SURVILLE

THE PEACE OF THE HOUSEHOLD

*

The adventure depicted in this Scene took place toward the end of the month of November, 1809, at the moment in which the transient Empire of Napoléon attained the climax of its splendor. The fanfares of the victory of Wagram still resounded in the heart of the Austrian monarchy. Peace was signed between France and the Coalition. The kings and the princes came accordingly, like the stars, to accomplish their revolutions around Napoléon, who gave himself the pleasure of dragging all Europe in his train,—a magnificent trial of power which he later displayed at Dresden.

Never, according to the testimony of contemporaries, had Paris seen more brilliant fêtes than those which preceded and followed the marriage of this sovereign with an Austrian archduchess. Never, in the greatest days of the ancient monarchy, had so many crowned heads thronged the banks of the Seine, and never had the French aristocracy been so wealthy and so brilliant as then. The profusion of diamonds displayed on costumes,

the embroideries of gold and of silver of the uniforms, contrasted so strongly with the Republican indigence, that it seemed as if the riches of the globe were displayed in the Parisian salons. A general intoxication had, as it were, taken possession of this empire of a day. All the military men, not excepting their chief, revelled like parvenus in the enjoyment of treasures conquered by a million of men in woolen epaulets whose requirements were satisfied with some yards of red ribbon. At this epoch, the greater number of the women displayed that ease of manner and that relaxation of the moral code which signalized the reign of Louis XV. Whether it were in imitation of the tone of the crumbled monarchy, whether it were that certain members of the Imperial family had set the example, as was asserted by the Frondeurs of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, it is certain that, men and women, all threw themselves into the pursuit of pleasure with an intrepidity which seemed to presage the end of the world. But there existed, at this time, another reason for this license. The infatuation of the women for the military grew to be like a frenzy and was too much in accord with the views of the Emperor, for him to put any restraint upon it. The frequent shocks of arms, which made all the treaties concluded between Europe and Napoléon resemble armistices, rendered the passions liable to dénouements as rapid as the decisions of the supreme chief of these kolbaks, of these dolmans and of these aiguillettes which so

greatly please the fair sex. Hearts were at this period as nomadic as regiments. Between a first and a fifth bulletin of the Grand Army, a woman might be successively courted, wife, mother and widow. Was it the prospect of a near widowhood, that of an endowment, or the hope of bearing a name promised to history, which rendered the soldiers so seductive? Were the women attracted to them by the certainty that the secret of their passions would be interred on the fields of battle, or should the cause of this gentle fanaticism be sought in the noble attraction which courage has for them? Perhaps these reasons, which the future historian of the Imperial manners and customs will doubtless amuse himself by weighing, counted for something in the facile promptness with which they yielded to love. Whatever it may have been, let us admit it here,—the laurels covered then a great many faults, the women sought ardently these hardy adventurers who appeared to them to be veritable sources of honor, of riches, or of pleasures, and in the eyes of the young girls, an epaulet, that predicting hieroglyphic, signified happiness and liberty. A feature of this epoch, unique in our annals, and which characterizes it, was a frenzied passion for everything that glittered. Never were there so many exhibitions of fireworks, never did the diamond attain so high a value. Then men, as greedy as the women for these white pebbles, adorned themselves with them as they did. Perhaps the necessity of transforming the booty into the shape that should

be the most easy to transport, was the cause of the high honor in which jewels were held in the army. A man was not so ridiculous as he would be to-day when the jabot of his shirt-front, or his fingers, display large diamonds. Murat, a man completely Oriental, set the example of a luxury absurd among modern soldiers.

The Comte de Gondreville, who was formerly known as the Citizen Malin and who had been celebrated by his abduction, now become a Lucullus of this conservative Senate which preserved nothing, had only delayed his fête in honor of the peace in order to better make his court to Napoléon, in endeavoring to eclipse the flatterers by whom he had been anticipated. The ambassadors of all the powers friendly to France, privileged to inherit from her without being obliged to pay any of her debts, the most important personages of the Empire, some princes even, were at this moment assembled in the salons of the opulent Senator. The dance was languishing, everyone was waiting for the Emperor, whose presence had been promised by the count. Napoléon would have kept his promise had it not been for the scene which took place that very evening between Joséphine and himself, a scene which presaged the coming divorce of these august spouses. The news of this event, then kept very secret, but which history has acquired, did not come to the ears of the courtiers, and did not influence otherwise than by the absence of Napoléon, the gaiety of the Comte de Gondreville's

fête. The prettiest women in Paris, eager to go to his house on the strength of hearsay evidence, were there at this moment in a formidable array of luxury, of coquetry, of adornment and of beauty. Proud of its wealth, the Bank here defied these glittering generals and these grand officers of the Empire, newly gorged with crosses, with titles and with decorations. These great balls were always occasions seized by the rich families on which to produce their heiresses before the eyes of Napoléon's pretorians, in the insane hope of exchanging their magnificent dots for an uncertain favor. Women who thought themselves strong enough in their beauty only, came to try its power. There, as elsewhere, pleasure was only a mask. The serene and laughing countenances, the calm brows concealed odious calculations; the testimonies of friendship were false, and more than one personage was less distrustful of his enemies than of his friends. These observations are necessary to explain the events of the little imbroglio which is the subject of this Scene, and the picture, however much it may be softened, of the tone which then pervaded the salons of Paris.

"Turn your eyes a little toward that broken column which supports a candelabra, do you perceive a young woman with her hair dressed in Chinese fashion, there, in the corner at the left? She has blue bell-flowers in the curls of chestnut hair which fall on each side of her head. Do you not see her? She is so pale that you would think

her suffering; she is delicate and quite petite; now she is turning her head toward you; her blue eyes, almond-shaped and charmingly soft, seem made expressly for weeping. But see now! she is stooping to look at Madame de Vaudremont across this maze of heads always in movement and the high coiffures of which intercept her view."

"Ah! I see her, my dear fellow. You had only to designate her to me as the whitest of all the women who are here, I would have recognized her. I had already noticed her; she has the most beautiful complexion that I have ever seen. At this distance I defy you to distinguish on her neck the pearls which separate the sapphires of her necklace. But she must have either reserved manners or great coquettishness, for the ruffles of her corsage scarcely permit one to suspect the beauty of her form. What shoulders! what whiteness, like the lily!"

"Who is she?" asked he who had spoken first.

"Ah! I do not know."

"Aristocrat! You wish then, Montcornet, to keep them all for yourself?"

"That suits you well to grumble at me!" replied Montcornet, smiling. "You think you have the right to insult a poor general like myself, because, happy rival of Soulanges, you do not make a single pirouette which does not alarm Madame de Vaudremont? Or is it because I arrived only a month ago in the promised land? Are you not insolent, you administrators who remain glued to your chairs

while we are in the midst of the shells! Come, Monsieur le Maître des Requêtes, let us glean in the field, the precarious possession of which will only fall to you at the moment when we quit it. The deuce! all the world must live! My friend, if you knew the German women, you would be of service to me, I think, with the Parisian woman who is dear to you."

"General, since you have honored with your attention this woman whom I see here for the first time, have then the charity to tell me if you have seen her dancing?"

"Eh! my dear Martial, where do you come from? If you should be sent on an embassy, I should have great doubts of your success. Do you not see three ranks of the most intrepid coquettes of Paris between her and the swarm of dancers which buzz under the chandelier, and did it not require the aid of your eyeglass to enable you to discover her in the angle formed by that column where she seems to be buried in obscurity, notwithstanding the candles which shine over her head? Between her and us, so many diamonds and so many glances sparkle, so many plumes float, so many laces, flowers and tresses wave, that it would be a real miracle if any dancer should be able to perceive her in the midst of these stars. How, Martial, you have not discovered in her the wife of some sub-prefect of La Lippe or of La Dyle who has come up to try to get her husband made a prefect?"

"Oh! he will be," said the Maître des Requêtes, quickly.

"I doubt it," laughingly replied the colonel of cuirassiers; "she appears to be as inexperienced in intrigue as you are in diplomacy. I wager, Martial, that you do not know how she comes to be there."

The Maître des Requêtes looked at the colonel of cuirassiers of the Guard with an air which betrayed as much disdain as curiosity.

"Well," said Montcornet continuing, "she doubtless arrived at nine o'clock precisely, the first one perhaps, and probably greatly embarrassed the Comtesse de Gondreville who does not know how to put two ideas together. Rebuffed by the lady of the house, pushed from one chair to another by each new arrival into the shadows of that little corner, she has allowed herself to be enclosed there, a victim of the jealousy of these ladies, who would not have asked anything better than to thus bury this dangerous countenance. She has not had any friend to encourage her to defend the place which she should occupy in the first rank, each one of these perfidious dancers has intimated to the men of her coterie that they are not to pay any attention to our poor friend, under penalty of the most terrible punishments. This is the way, my dear fellow, that these pretty things, so tender, so candid in appearance, have formed their coalition against the unknown; and that without any one of these women having said anything but 'Do you know, my dear, that little lady in blue?' Well now, Martial, if you wish to be overwhelmed within a quarter of an hour with more flattering looks and

enticing interrogations than you would receive, perhaps, in the whole course of your life, make the attempt to pierce the triple rampart which defends the queen of La Dyle or of La Lippe or of La Charente. You will see if the most stupid of these women will not know how to invent immediately some device capable of stopping the man the most determined to bring into the light our plaintive unknown. Do you not think that she has a little the air of an elegy?"

"You think so, Montcornet? She is then a married woman?"

"Why may not she be a widow?"

"She would be more active," said the Maître des Requêtes, laughing.

"Perhaps she is a widow whose husband plays bouillotte," replied the handsome cuirassier.

"In fact, since the peace, there are a great many of that class of widows!" replied Martial. "But, my dear Montcornet, we are two idiots. That head expresses still too much ingenuousness, there still breathes too much of youth and of freshness on the forehead and around the temples for her to be a wife. What tones of carnation! nothing is faded in the modeling of the nose. The lips, the chin, everything in this face is as fresh as the bud of a white rose, although the physiognomy is, as it were, veiled by the shades of sadness. Who can make this young girl cry?"

"The women cry for so little!" said the colonel.

"I do not know," replied Martial, "but she does

not weep because she is there without being able to dance, her grief does not date from to-day; you may see that she has adorned herself for this evening carefully. She loves already, I will bet upon it."

"Bah! Perhaps she is the daughter of some German princeling, no one speaks to her," said Montcornet.

"Ah! how unhappy is a poor girl!" replied Martial. "Can anyone have more grace and delicacy than our little unknown? Well, not one of those vixens who surround her and who call themselves sensitive, will address a word to her. If she should speak, we might see if her teeth were fine."

"Ah! there you go off like milk, at the least elevation of the temperature!" cried the colonel, a little vexed to encounter so promptly a rival in his friend.

"What!" said the Maître des Requêtes without noticing the general's interrogation and turning his eyeglass on all the personages who surrounded them, "what! no one here can give us the name of this exotic flower?"

"Ah! she is some one's young lady companion," said Montcornet to him.

"Good! A young lady companion who wears sapphires worthy of a queen, and with a dress of Mechlin lace? Try it again, General! You would, also, not be very strong in diplomacy if in your estimates you pass in one moment from the German princess to the young lady companion."

General Montcornet caught by the arm a fat little

man whose partly gray hair and intelligent eyes might be seen alternately in all the corners of the rooms, and who introduced himself without ceremony into the different groups where he was respectfully welcomed.

"Gondreville, my dear friend," said Montcornet to him, "who is that charming little woman seated over there under that immense candelabra?"

"The candelabra? Ravrio, my dear fellow; Isabey furnished the design."

"Oh! I have already recognized your taste and your luxury in the piece of furniture; but the woman?"

"Ah! I do not know her. It is doubtless some friend of my wife."

"Or your mistress, you old sly one."

"No, word of honor! The Comtesse de Gondreville is the only woman capable of inviting people whom no one knows."

Notwithstanding this observation full of sharpness, the fat little man retained on his lips the smile of inward satisfaction which the supposition of the colonel of cuirassiers had caused to appear there. The latter rejoined in a neighboring group, the Maître des Requêtes, then occupied in seeking, but in vain, some information concerning the unknown. He grasped him by the arm and said to him in his ear:

"My dear Martial, look out for yourself! Madame de Vaudremont has been looking at you for some minutes with a desperate attention, she is a

woman capable of guessing by the movement only of your lips what you say to me; our eyes have already been only too significant, she has very easily seen them and followed their direction, and I believe her at this moment to be more occupied than we ourselves are with the little lady in blue."

"That is a very old stratagem of war, my dear Montcornet! What does it matter to me, moreover? I am like the Emperor, when I make conquests, I keep them."

"Martial, your fatuity is inviting its own punishment. What! you little citizen, you have the happiness of being the designated husband of Madame de Vaudremont, of a widow of twenty-two, afflicted with four thousand napoleons of income, of a woman who slips on your fingers diamonds as fine as this one," he added, taking the left hand of the Maitre des Requêtes, who yielded it to him complacently, "and you have still the pretension of being a Lovelace, as if you were a colonel and under the obligation of maintaining the military reputation in the garrisons! Fie! But reflect on all that you may lose."

"I shall not lose, at least, my liberty," replied Martial, laughing in a forced manner.

He threw a passionate look at Madame de Vaudremont, who replied only by a smile full of disquietude, for she had seen the colonel examining the ring of the Maitre des Requêtes.

"Listen, Martial," resumed the colonel, "if you go fluttering around my young unknown, I will

undertake the conquest of Madame de Vaudremont."

"You have free permission, dear cuirassier, but you will not obtain *that*," said the young Maître des Requêtes, putting the polished nail of his thumb under one of his upper teeth and making thereby a little bantering noise.

"Remember that I am a bachelor," replied the colonel, "that my sword is all my fortune, and that to defy me thus, is to seat Tantalus before a feast which he will devour."

"Prrr!"

This mocking accumulation of consonants served for a reply to the provocation of the general, whom his friend looked at pleasantly from head to foot before leaving him. The fashion of that time required a man to wear at a ball, breeches of white cashmere and silk stockings. This handsome costume set off very well the perfection of Montcornet's figure, as he was then at the age of thirty-five and attracted attention by the tall stature required by the cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard, the fine uniform of which increased his imposing appearance, still young, notwithstanding the stoutness due to equitation. His black mustaches added to the frank expression of a countenance truly military, the forehead of which was large and open, the nose aquiline and the mouth red. The manners of Montcornet, characterized by a certain nobility due to the habit of command, might please a woman who would have the good sense not to wish to make

a slave of her husband. The colonel smiled in looking at the Maitre des Requêtes, one of his best college friends, and whose small and slender figure obliged him, in replying to his mockery, to lower a little the friendly glance of his eyes.

The Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon was a young Provençal, whom Napoléon protected and who seemed destined for some sumptuous embassy; he had seduced the Emperor by an Italian complacency, by the genius of intrigue, by that eloquence of the salon and that science of manners which replaces so easily the eminent qualities of a solid man. Although young and lively, his countenance possessed already the unmoving brilliancy of tin, one of the qualities indispensable to diplomats, and which permits them to hide their emotions, to disguise their sentiments,—if, however, this impassibility does not reveal in them the absence of all emotion and the death of sentiment. The heart of diplomats may be regarded as an insoluble problem, for the three most illustrious ambassadors of the epoch signalized themselves by the persistence of hatred and by romantic attachments. Nevertheless, Martial belonged to that class of men who are capable of calculating their future in the midst of their most ardent enjoyments, he had already judged the world and hid his ambition under the apparent fatuity of a man of gallantry, disguising his talent under the liveries of mediocrity, after having remarked the rapidity of the advancement of those who gave the least offense to the master.

The two friends were obliged to leave each other with a cordial grasp of the hand. The ritornello which gave notice to the ladies to form the quadrilles of a new contradance, drove the men from the large open space in which they were talking in the middle of the salon. This rapid conversation, held in the interval which always separates the contradances, took place before the chimney-piece of the grand salon of the Hôtel de Gondreville. The questions and the replies of this gossip, common enough at a ball, had been, as it were, whispered by each of these speakers into his neighbor's ear. Nevertheless, the girandoles and the candles of the chimney-piece had diffused such an abundant light on the two friends that their countenances, too strongly lit up, did not succeed in disguising, notwithstanding their diplomatic discretion, the almost imperceptible expression of their sentiments, neither from the keen countess nor from the candid unknown. This mental espionage is, perhaps, for the idlers one of the pleasures which they find in the world, whilst in it so many deceived simpletons weary themselves without daring to acknowledge it.

In order to appreciate all the interest of this conversation, it is necessary to relate an event which by invisible bonds was about to reunite the personages of this little drama, then scattered about in the salons. About eleven o'clock in the evening, at the moment when the dancers resumed their places, the society of the Hôtel Gondreville saw appear the most beautiful woman in Paris, the

queen of the fashion, the only one who was lacking in this splendid assembly. She made for herself a law to arrive, always at the moment in which the salons presented that animated movement which does not permit the women to preserve for any length of time the freshness of their countenances and that of their toilets. This rapid moment is like the springtime of a ball. An hour later, when the pleasure has passed, when fatigue has arrived, everything is faded. Madame de Vaudremont never committed the fault of remaining at a fête to be seen with drooping flowers, curls out of place, with a rumpled toilet, with a countenance like all those others which, assailed by sleep, do not always succeed in deceiving it. She kept herself carefully from being seen, like her rivals, with her beauty dull; she knew how to sustain skilfully her reputation for coquetry by leaving a ball always as brilliant as when she entered it. The women whispered to each other, with a feeling of envy, that she prepared and put on as many adornments as she had balls to attend in an evening. This time, Madame de Vaudremont was not going to be sufficiently mistress of herself to leave when she pleased the salon in which she now arrived in triumph. Stopping a moment on the threshold of the door, she threw keen, observing, though rapid, glances on the women, whose toilets were instantly studied, in order to convince herself that her own would eclipse them all. The celebrated coquette offered herself to the admiration of the assembly

conducted by one of the bravest colonels of the artillery of the Guard, a favorite of the Emperor, the Comte de Soulanges. The momentary and fortuitous union of these two personages had in it, doubtless, something mysterious. On hearing the announcement of Monsieur de Soulanges and the Comtesse de Vaudremont, some of the women placed as wall-flowers rose, and the men hastening from the neighboring salons crowded in the doorways of the principal salon. One of those jesters who are never missing in these crowded reunions, said, on seeing the entrance of the countess and her cavalier, that the ladies had, all of them, as much curiosity to contemplate a man faithful to his passion as the men had to examine a pretty woman difficult to be placed.

Although the Comte de Soulanges, a young man of about thirty-two, had been endowed with that nervous temperament which produces in a man the great qualities, his slender form and his pale complexion predisposed the spectator but little in his favor; his black eyes displayed much vivacity, but in the world he was taciturn, and nothing in him revealed one of those talents for oratory which were later to shine in the Right in the legislative assemblies of the Restoration. The Comtesse de Vaudremont, a tall woman slightly plump, with a skin of a dazzling whiteness, who carried, very well, her little head and possessed the immense advantage of inspiring love by the gentleness of her manners, was one of those creatures who fulfil all

the promises made by their beauty. This couple, thus become for some moments the object of general attention, did not long permit curiosity to exercise itself on their account. The colonel and the countess seemed to comprehend perfectly that chance had placed them in a slightly embarrassing situation. On seeing them advance, Martial had thrown himself into the group of men who occupied the post before the chimney, in order to observe, between the heads which formed, as it were, a rampart for him, Madame de Vaudremont with the jealous attention which is given by the first fire of passion: a secret voice semed to say to him that the success of which he was so proud might perhaps be precarious; but the smile of cold politeness with which the countess thanked Monsieur de Soulanges and the gesture which she made to dismiss him, while seating herself near Madame de Gondreville, relaxed all the muscles which jealousy had contracted in his countenance. However, perceiving Soulanges still standing at a distance of two steps from the sofa on which Madame de Vaudremont was seated, and that he did not seem to quite comprehend the look by which the young coquette had intimated to him that they were both in a somewhat absurd position, the Provençal, with his volcanic brain, knit again the black brows which shaded his blue eyes, stroked carefully the curls of his brown hair, and, without betraying the emotion which made his heart palpitate, watched the countenance of the countess and that of Monsieur de

Soulanges, all the time talking lightly with his neighbors. He even seized the hand of the colonel who came up to renew their conversation, but he listened to him without hearing him, so great was his preoccupation. Soulanges looked tranquilly at the quadruple rank of women which framed, as it were, the immense salon of the Senator, while admiring this border of diamonds, of rubies, of golden decorations and of heads beautifully adorned, the splendor of which almost paled the light of the candles, the crystal of the chandeliers and the gilded ornaments. The careless calm of his rival caused the Maître des Requêtes to lose countenance. Incapable of mastering the secret impatience which transported him, Martial advanced towards Madame de Vaudremont to salute her. When the Provençal appeared, Soulanges looked at him with a dull and indifferent glance and turned away his head in an impertinent manner. A grave silence reigned in the salon, where curiosity was at its height. On all the eager faces might be seen the most curious expressions; each one feared or waited for one of those outbursts which people of the world are always so careful to avoid. All at once, the pale face of the count became as red as the scarlet of the ornaments of his dress, and his glance immediately fell to the floor, as though to conceal the origin of his trouble. On seeing the unknown lady, humbly seated at the foot of the candelabra, he passed with a downcast air before the Maître des Requêtes and took refuge in one

of the card-rooms. Martial and the assembly in general thought that Soulanges had yielded his place to him thus publicly through fear of the ridicule which is always bestowed upon dethroned lovers. The Maître des Requêtes lifted his head proudly, looked at the unknown lady; then, when he had taken his seat in an easy manner beside Madame de Vaudremont, he listened to her with so distracted an air that he did not hear these words, spoken behind her fan by the coquette:

"Martial, you will do me the pleasure not to wear, this evening, the ring which you have taken from me. I have my reasons, and I will explain them to you in a moment, when we retire.—You will give me your arm to go to the Princesse de Wagram's."

"Why then did you take the colonel's hand?" asked the baron.

"I met him under the peristyle," she replied; "but leave me, everyone is looking at us."

Martial rejoined the colonel of cuirassiers. The little lady in blue thus became the common source of disquietude, which agitated at the same time and so diversely the cuirassier, Soulanges, Martial and the Comtesse de Vaudremont.

When the two friends separated, after having exchanged the defiance which terminated their conversation, the Maître des Requêtes hastened to the side of Madame de Vaudremont and was able to place her in the midst of the most brilliant quadrille. Taking advantage of that species of intoxication into which

a woman is always thrown by the dance and by the movement of a ball, in which the men display themselves with the deceiving adornment of the toilet, which gives to them no less attraction than it lends to women, Martial thought that he could now give himself up with impunity to the charm which attracted him toward the unknown. Although he succeeded in concealing from the restlessly active eyes of the countess, the first glances which he bestowed upon the lady in blue, he was very soon surprised *flagrante delicto;* and if he made excuses for a first preoccupation, he did not justify the impertinent silence by which he replied later to the most seductive of the questions which a woman can address to a man, "Do you love me this evening?" The more thoughtful he became, the more pressing and teasing was the countess. While Martial was dancing, the colonel went from group to group, seeking everywhere for information concerning the young unknown. After having exhausted the complacency of everybody, and even that of the indifferent, he determined to take advantage of a moment in which the Comtesse de Gondreville appeared to be at liberty to ask of her, herself, the name of this mysterious lady, when he perceived a small open space between the broken column which supported the candelabra and the two adjoining divans. The colonel profited by a moment in which the dance had left vacant a great number of the chairs which formed several ranks of the fortifications defended by the mothers or by the

women of a certain age, and undertook to traverse this palisade covered with shawls and handkerchiefs. He set himself to complimenting the dowagers; then, from one woman to another, from politeness to politeness, he finally succeeded in attaining the empty space near the unknown. At the risk of hooking himself upon the griffins and the chimeras of the immense candelabra, he maintained himself there under the fire and the wax of the candles, to the great discontent of Martial.

Too adroit to accost brusquely the pretty lady in blue whom he had at his right, the colonel commenced by saying to a great lady, sufficiently ugly, who was seated at his left:

"Is not this, madame, a very handsome ball! What luxury! what movement! Word of honor, the ladies are all pretty! If you are not dancing, it is doubtless because you do not wish to do so."

This insipid conversation opened by the colonel had for its object to make his neighbor at his right speak, but she, silent and preoccupied, did not give him the slightest attention. The officer held in reserve a number of phrases all of which should terminate with, "And you, madame?" on which he counted a great deal. But he was strangely surprised to perceive tears in the eyes of the unknown, who appeared to be entirely taken captive by Madame de Vaudremont.

"Madame is, doubtless, married?" Colonel Montcornet finally asked in a not very well assured tone.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the unknown.

"Monsieur your husband is doubtless here?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And why then, madame, do you remain in this place? Is it through coquetry?"

The mournful lady smiled sadly.

"Will you do me the honor, madame, to allow me to be your cavalier for the following contradance? and I certainly will not bring you back here! I see near the chimney-piece an empty sofa, let us go there. When so many people make preparations to throne themselves, and when the folly of the day is royalty, I cannot conceive that you should refuse to accept the title of queen of the ball which seems promised to your beauty."

"Monsieur, I do not dance."

The brevity of the answers of this lady was so discouraging that the colonel saw himself forced to abandon the situation. Martial, who divined the last request of the colonel and the refusal which he had met with, commenced to smile and stroked his chin, displaying the ring which he had on his finger.

"At what are you laughing?" said the Comtesse de Vaudremont to him.

"At the unsuccess of that poor colonel, who has just made an awkward mistake—"

"I asked you to take off your ring," said the countess, interrupting him.

"I did not hear it."

"If you hear nothing this evening, you seem to be able to see everything, Monsieur le Baron,"

replied Madame de Vaudremont, with an air of pique.

"There is a young man who has a very fine diamond," said the unknown lady to the colonel.

"Magnificent," he replied. "That young man is the Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon, one of my most intimate friends."

"I thank you for having told me his name," she replied. "He appears to be very agreeable."

"Yes, but he is a little airy."

"It might be thought that he is on good terms with the Comtesse de Vaudremont?" asked the young lady, interrogating the colonel with her eyes.

"On the very best terms!"

The unknown turned pale.

"Come," thought the soldier, "she is in love with that devil of a Martial."

"I thought that Madame de Vaudremont had been engaged for a long time to Monsieur de Soulanges," replied the young woman, somewhat relieved of the inward suffering which had altered the brilliancy of her countenance.

"For the last week, the countess has forsaken him," replied the colonel. "But you must have seen that poor Soulanges when he came in; he is still trying not to believe in his unhappiness."

"I saw him," said the lady in blue.

Then she added a "Monsieur, I thank you," the intimation of which was equivalent to a dismissal.

At this moment the contradance was about to come to an end, the colonel, disappointed, had only

time to retire in saying to himself as a sort of consolation:

"She is married."

"Well, courageous cuirassier," cried the baron, drawing the colonel into the embrasure of a window to breathe the pure air of the gardens,—"How did you succeed?"

"She is married, my dear fellow."

"What has that to do with it?"

"The deuce! I have some morals," replied the colonel, "I only wish to make my addresses to women whom I might marry. Moreover, Martial, she formally indicated to me her desire not to dance."

"Colonel, we will bet your dappled-gray horse against a hundred napoleons that she will dance this evening with me."

"Agreed!" said the colonel, striking hands with the fop. "Meanwhile I am going to see Soulanges, he is perhaps acquainted with this lady, who seemed to me to be interested in him."

"My brave fellow, you have lost," said Martial, laughing. "My eyes have met hers, and I know what I can do. Dear Colonel, you would not quarrel with me for dancing with her after the refusal which you have met with?"

"No, no; he laughs best who laughs last. For the rest, Martial, I am a fair player and a good enemy, I forewarn you that she loves diamonds."

With these words, the two friends separated. General Montcornet directed his steps toward the

card salons where he perceived the Comte de Soulanges seated at a bouillotte table. Although there existed between the two colonels only that commonplace friendship which is established by the perils of war and the duties of the service, the colonel of cuirassiers was sorry to see the colonel of artillery, whom he knew for a sensible man, engaged in a set in which he might ruin himself. The piles of gold and of banknotes displayed on the fatal cloth bore witness to the fury of the play. A circle of silent men surrounded the players at the table. Occasionally a few words were heard, as *passe*, *jeu*, *tiens*, *mille louis*, *tenus;* but it seemed, in looking at these five motionless personages, that there was no language but that of the eyes. When the colonel, frightened at the pallor of Soulanges, approached him, the count was gaining. The Maréchal Duc d'Isemberg, Keller, a celebrated banker, rose, completely stripped of very considerable sums. Soulanges became still more sombre in gathering up a mass of gold and of notes, he did not even count them; a bitter disdain curled his lips, he seemed to menace fortune instead of thanking her for her favors.

"Courage," said the colonel to him, "courage, Soulanges!"

Then, thinking to render him a real service in dragging him away from play:

"Come," he added, "I have a good piece of news to give you, but on one condition."

"What one?" asked Soulanges.

"That of answering me that which I am going to ask you."

The Comte de Soulanges rose abruptly, put his earnings with a very careless air into a handkerchief which he had twisted in a convulsive manner, and his visage was so ferocious, that none of the players were disposed to quarrel with him for playing *Charlemagne.** The countenances even seemed to brighten when this lowering and chagrined head was no longer in the luminous circle which was described above the table by a bouillotte cluster of lights.

"These devils of the military work together like thieves at a fair!" said, in a low voice, a minor diplomat, taking the colonel's place.

One face only, pale and fatigued, turned toward the new player and said to him, throwing upon him a regard which flashed, but which extinguished itself like the fire of a diamond:

"Who says military does not say civil, Monsieur le Ministre."

"My dear fellow," said Montcornet to Soulanges, drawing him into a corner, "this morning the Emperor spoke of you in terms of eulogy, and your promotion to the rank of marshal is not doubtful."

"The patron does not love the artillery."

"Yes, but he adores the nobility, and you are a *ci-devant!* The patron," resumed Montcornet, "has said that those who were married in Paris during

*Retiring from the game.—NOTE BY TRANSLATOR.

the campaign should not be considered as in disgrace. Eh! Well?"

The Comte de Soulanges seemed to comprehend nothing of this discourse.

"Ah there! I hope now," the colonel went on, "that you will tell me if you are acquainted with a charming little woman seated at the foot of a candelabra—"

At these words, the eyes of the count became animated, and he seized the colonel's hand with an excessive violence.

"My dear General," he said to him in a voice which was sensibly altered, "if any other than you had put that question to me I would have broken his skull with this mass of gold. Leave me, I entreat you. I have much more inclination this evening to blow out my brains than—I hate everything that I see. Thus I am about to go. This enjoyment, this music, these stupid faces which laugh, assassinate me."

"My poor friend," replied Montcornet in a soft voice, striking his hand in a friendly manner into that of Soulanges, "you are passionate! What would you say then if I should inform you that Martial thinks so little of Madame de Vaudremont that he is enamored of this little lady?"

"If he speaks to her," cried Soulanges, stammering with fury, "I will make him as flat as his portfolio, even if the puppy were in the Emperor's lap."

And the count fell, as if he were exhausted, on

the seat towards which the colonel had led him. The latter retired slowly, he perceived that Soulanges was a prey to an anger too violent to be calmed by the pleasantries or the cares of a superficial friendship. When Colonel Montcornet reentered the great ball-room, Madame de Vaudremont was the first person who presented herself to his regards, and he remarked on her countenance, ordinarily so calm, some traces of an ill-disguised agitation. A chair was vacant near her, the colonel seated himself upon it.

"I wager that you are tormented?" he said.

"A bagatelle, General. I wish to leave here, I have promised to be at the ball of the Grande Duchesse de Berg, and it is necessary that I should first go to the Princesse de Wagram's. Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon, who knows it, is amusing himself with talking flatteries to the dowagers."

"It is not that only which occasioned your disquietude, and I will wager a hundred louis that you will remain here this evening."

"Impertinent!"

"I have then said truly?"

"Well, what was I thinking of?" replied the countess, giving the colonel's fingers a little rap with her fan. "I am capable of rewarding you if you guess it."

"I will not accept the challenge, I have too many advantages."

"Presumptuous!"

"You fear to see Martial at the feet—"

"Of whom?" asked the countess, affecting surprise.

"Of that candelabra," replied the colonel, indicating the beautiful unknown, and looking at the countess with an embarrassing attention.

"You have guessed it," replied the coquette, concealing her face with her fan with which she commenced to play. "The old Madame de Lansac who, as you know, is as malignant as an old monkey," she resumed after a moment of silence, "has just said to me that Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon would run some danger in courting this unknown, who has presented herself here this evening like a trouble-feast. I would rather see Death than that face so cruelly beautiful and as pale as a vision. It is my evil genius. Madame de Lansac," she continued, after having made an involuntary sign of vexation, "who only goes to a ball to see everything while making pretence to sleep, has made me cruelly anxious. Martial will pay me dearly for the trick which he is playing me. However, persuade him, General, since he is your friend, not to cause me pain."

"I have just seen a man who proposes nothing less than to blow out his brains if he accosts that little lady. That man, madame, is as good as his word. But I know Martial, these perils are only so many encouragements. There is more,—we have bet—"

Here the colonel lowered his voice.

"Is that true?" asked the countess.

"On my honor."

"Thanks, General," replied Madame de Vaudremont, throwing upon him a look full of coquetry.

"Will you do me the honor to dance with me?"

"Yes, but the second contradance. During this one, I wish to know how this little intrigue will turn out and who is this little lady in blue; she has an interesting air."

The colonel, seeing that Madame de Vaudremont wished to be alone, went away, satisfied with having so well begun his attack.

There are to be met with in festivals some ladies who, like Madame de Lansac, are there much as old mariners are on the seashore occupied with watching the young sailors struggling with the tempest. At this moment, Madame de Lansac, who appeared to be interested in the personages of this scene, could easily perceive the struggle which was taking place in the countess. The young coquette might well fan herself gracefully, smile at the young men who bowed to her and put into use all the devices which a woman uses to conceal her emotion, the dowager, one of the most observing and malicious duchesses which the eighteenth century had bequeathed to the nineteenth, was quite able to read her heart and her mind. The old lady seemed to recognize all the imperceptible movements which disclose the affections of the soul. The slightest fold which might come to wrinkle that forehead so white and so pure, the most imperceptible quiver of the cheeks, the play of the evebrows, the least visible inflection of

the lips, the moving coral of which could conceal nothing from her, were, for the duchess, like the characters of a book. From the depths of her sofa, which her dress entirely filled, this coquette emerita, all the while talking with a diplomat who had sought her out in order to gather the anecdotes which she related so well, was admiring herself in the young coquette; she took a liking to her in seeing her disguise so well her chagrin and the wounding of her heart. Madame de Vaudremont felt, in fact, as much grief as she feigned gayety: she had thought that she had found in Martial a man of talent upon whose support she might rely for the embellishment of her life with all the enchantment of power; in this moment she recognized an error as cruel for her reputation as for her self-love. With her, as with the other women of this epoch, the suddenness of the passions augmented their ardor. The souls who live a great deal and quickly, do not suffer less than those who consume themselves in a single affection. The predilection of the countess for Martial was of very recent origin, it is true; but the most inefficient of surgeons knows that the suffering caused by the amputation of a living member is more painful than is that of an affected limb. There was a promise for the future in Madame de Vaudremont's affection for Martial, whilst her former passion was without hope, and poisoned by the remorse of Soulanges. The old duchess, who saw that the opportune moment for speaking to the countess had arrived, promptly

dismissed her ambassador; for, when it is a question of mistresses and lovers falling out, all other interests pale, even for an old woman. To open the combat, Madame de Lansac threw upon Madame de Vaudremont a sardonic look which made the young coquette fear that she saw her fate in the hands of the dowager. There is in these looks from one woman to another something which is like the torches brought on for the last scene of a tragedy. It is necessary to have known this duchess, to be able to appreciate the terror which the expression of her countenance inspired in the countess. Madame de Lansac was tall, her features caused it to be said of her: "There is a woman who must have been pretty!" She covered her cheeks with so much rouge that her wrinkles were scarcely visible; but far from receiving a factitious brilliancy from this accumulated carmine, her eyes were only the more dull. She wore a great number of diamonds and dressed herself with sufficient taste to afford no opening for ridicule. Her pointed nose announced epigram. A set of teeth, well cared for, preserved for her mouth an ironical grimace which recalled that of Voltaire. However, the exquisite politeness of her manners softened so well the malicious bent of her ideas that she could not be accused of wickedness. The gray eyes of the old lady lit up, a triumphal look accompanied by a smile which said: "I certainly promised it to you!" traversed the salon and kindled the scarlet of hope on the pale cheeks of the young woman who was sighing at the foot of

the candelabra. This alliance between Madame de Lansac and the unknown could not escape the observing eyes of the Comtesse de Vaudremont, who had glimpses of a mystery and wished to penetrate it.

At this moment, the Baron de la Roche-Hugon, after having finished questioning all the dowagers without having been able to learn the name of the lady in blue, addressed himself, in despair, to the Comtesse de Gondreville and received only this unsatisfactory reply:

"It is a lady whom the *ancient* Duchesse de Lansac presented tc me."

Turning by chance toward the sofa occupied by the old lady, the Maître des Requêtes surprised the look of intelligence which she had given the unknown, and, although he had been on sufficiently bad terms with her for some time, he resolved to accost her.

On seeing the sprightly baron hovering around her sofa, the ancient duchess smiled with a sardonic malignity and looked at Madame de Vaudremont with an air which made Colonel Montcornet laugh.

"If the old *Bohémienne* puts on an air of friendship," thought the baron, "she will doubtless play me some evil turn.—Madame," he said to her, "you are charged, I am told, with the guardianship of a very precious treasure!"

"Do you take me for a dragon?" asked the old lady. "But of whom are you speaking?" she

added, with a mildness of voice which restored Martial to hope.

"Of that unknown little lady, whom the jealousy of all these coquettes has shut up in that corner. You are doubtless acquainted with her family?"

"Yes," said the duchess; "but what would you do with an heiress from the provinces, who has been married for some time, a young girl, well-born, whom you do not know, she goes nowhere."

"Why does she not dance? She is so beautiful! Are you willing that we should make a treaty of peace? If you will deign to instruct me in all that it would be to my interest to know, I swear to you that a demand for the restitution of the forests of Navarreins from the *domaine extraordinaire* * will be warmly supported before the Emperor."

The younger branch of the House of Navarreins "quarters with Lansac, which is of azure *au baton écoté d'argent*, flanked by six lance heads, also in argent put in pale," and the liaison of the old lady with Louis XV. had procured for her the title of *Duchesse à brevet;* and, as the Navarreins had not yet re-entered into possession of their property, the young Maitre des Requêtes proposed quite simply a base action to the old lady, in instigating her to redemand the property belonging to the elder branch.

"Monsieur," replied the old lady, with a deceitful gravity, "bring me the Comtesse de Vaudremont, I

*Property which had been acquired by France under the Empire by conquest or treaty, and which was held at the disposition of the Emperor.—NOTE BY TRANSLATOR.

promise you to reveal to her the mystery which renders our unknown so interesting. See, all the men of the ball have arrived at the same state of curiosity as yourself. All eyes are involuntarily turned toward that candelabra where my protégée has modestly placed herself, she is receiving all the homages of which it was wished to deprive her. Very fortunate will he be whom she selects to dance with!"

Then she interrupted herself, fixing on the Comtesse de Vaudremont one of those looks which say so clearly: "We are speaking of you." Then she added:

" I think that you would rather learn the name of the unknown from the mouth of your beautiful countess than from mine?"

The attitude of the duchess was so significant that Madame de Vaudremont rose, came across to her, sat down on the chair which Martial offered her; and, without paying any attention to him, she said, smiling:

"I divined, madame, that you were speaking of me; but I admit my inferiority, I do not know if it were good or evil."

Madame de Lansac grasped with her old hand, dry and withered, the pretty hand of the young woman, and in a tone of compassion she replied to her in a low voice:

"Poor little one!"

The two women looked at each other. Madame de Vaudremont comprehended that Martial was

superfluous, and dismissed him by saying to him with an imperious air:

"Leave us!"

The Maître des Requêtes, little satisfied to see the countess under the charm of the dangerous sibyl who had attracted her to her, looked at her with one of those masculine looks, powerful for a heart that loves blindly, but which appear ridiculous to a woman when she commences to judge him for whom she has an affection.

"Do you pretend to imitate the Emperor?" said Madame de Vaudremont, turning her head in three-quarters view, in order to contemplate the Maître des Requêtes with an ironical air.

Martial was too well accustomed to the usages of the world, was too shrewd and too calculating, to expose himself to the risk of breaking with a woman so well received at court and whom the Emperor wished to see married; he counted, moreover, upon the jealousy which he proposed to awaken in her as the surest method of discovering the secret of her coldness, and went away all the more willingly that at this instant a new contradance set everybody in movement. The baron had the appearance of giving up his place to the quadrilles, he went to lean against the marble of a console, crossed his arms on his chest and gave all his attention to the conversation of the two ladies. From time to time he followed the looks which both of them threw at intervals on the unknown. While thus comparing the countess with this new beauty, whom mystery

rendered so attractive, the baron fell into those odious calculations habitual with successful gallants,—he hesitated between a fortune to take and his caprice to satisfy. The reflection from the light caused his thoughtful and sombre countenance to be so strongly relieved against the draperies of white moire, rumpled by his black hair, that he might have been compared to some evil genius. At a little distance, more than one observer doubtless said to himself,—"There's another poor devil who appears to amuse himself a great deal!" His right shoulder lightly supported against the casing of the door which opened from the dancing salon into the card room, the colonel could laugh unseen under his full mustaches, he enjoyed the pleasure of contemplating the tumult of the ball; he saw a hundred pretty heads turning according to the caprices of the dance; he read on some faces, as on those of the countess and of his friend Martial, the secrets of their agitation; then, turning his head, he asked himself what relation existed between the sombre air of the Comte de Soulanges, still seated on the sofa, and the plaintive physiognomy of the unknown lady on whose countenance appeared alternately the joys of hope and the anguishes of an involuntary terror. Montcornet was there like the king of the festival, he found in this moving tableau a complete view of the world, and he laughed inwardly in receiving the interested smiles of a hundred women brilliant and adorned,—a colonel of the Imperial Guard, a rank which was equivalent to that of

General of Brigade, was certainly one of the most desirable *partis* of the army. It was about midnight. The conversations, the play, the dancing, the coquetry, the interests, the malice and the projects of various kinds, everything had arrived at that degree of warmth which draws from a young man the exclamation:—"What a beautiful ball!"

"My little angel," said Madame de Lansac to the countess, "you are at an age at which I committed a great many faults. In seeing you suffering just now a thousand deaths, it occurred to me to give you some charitable advice. To commit faults at twenty-two, is not that to spoil one's future, is not that to tear the dress which you are going to put on? My dear, we only learn very late how to wear it without rumpling it. Continue, dear heart, to procure for yourself skilful enemies and friends without shrewdness in their conduct, and you will see what a pretty little life you will lead some day."

"Ah! madame, a woman has a great deal of trouble to be happy, has she not?" cried the countess, ingenuously.

"My little one, it is necessary to know how to choose, at your age, between pleasures and happiness. You wish to marry Martial, who is neither stupid enough to make a good husband nor passionate enough to be a lover. He has debts, my dear; he is a man to devour your fortune; but that would be nothing if he made you happy. Do you not see how old he is? This man must have been often diseased, he is enjoying the last of his pleasures. In three

years, he will be a man finished. The ambitious man will commence, perhaps he will succeed. I do not think so. Who is he? An intriguer who may possess to a marvelous degree a talent for affairs and chatter agreeably; but he is too conceited to have a real merit, he will not go far. Moreover, look at him! Can it not be read on his forehead that, at this moment, it is not a young and pretty woman whom he sees in you, but the two millions which you possess? He does not love you, my dear, he calculates you as though it were a question of a business transaction. If you wish to be married, take a man somewhat older, who would have consideration and who would be midway in his journey. A widow should not make of her marriage merely a little love affair. Is a mouse caught twice in the same trap? At this time, a new contract should be a speculation for you, and it is necessary for you in marrying again to have at least the hope of hearing yourself called one day Madame la Maréchale."

At this moment, the eyes of the two women were naturally fixed upon the handsome figure of Colonel Montcornet.

"If you wish to play the difficult rôle of a coquette and not marry," resumed the duchess with good nature, "ah! my poor little one, you know better than any one else how to heap up the clouds of a tempest and to dissipate them. But I entreat you, never make a pleasure of disturbing the peace of households, of destroying the union of families and the pleasure of women who are happy. I have

played it, my dear, that dangerous rôle. Ah! Mon Dieu! for a triumph of self-love one often assassinates poor virtuous creatures; for there exist truly, my dear, virtuous women, and you create for yourself mortal hatreds. A little later I learned that, according to the expression of the Duc d' Albe, a salmon is worth more than a thousand frogs! Certainly a veritable love gives a thousand times more pleasure than the ephemeral passions which one excites! Well, I came here to preach to you. Yes, you are the cause of my appearance in this salon which stinks of people. Have I not come here to see actors? Formerly, my dear, you received them in your boudoir; but in the salon, *fi donc!* Why do you look at me with such an astonished air? Listen to me! If you wish to play with men," resumed the old lady, "disturb only the hearts of those whose life is not yet definitely arranged, of those who have no duties to fulfil; the others will not forgive us for the disorders which have rendered them happy. Profit by this maxim derived from my long experience. This poor Soulanges, for example, whose head you have turned, and whom for the last fifteen months you have intoxicated, God knows how! well, do you know on whom your blows fall?—On his whole life. He has been married for thirty months, he is adored by a charming creature whom he loves and whom he deceives; she lives in tears and in the most bitter silence. Soulanges has had moments of remorse more cruel than his pleasures have been

sweet. And you, artful little woman, you have betrayed him. Well, come and contemplate your work."

The old duchess took the hand of Madame de Vaudremont and they both rose.

"See," said Madame de Lansac to her, with her eyes indicating to her the unknown, pale and trembling under the lights of the candelabra, "there is my great-niece, the Comtesse de Soulanges; she has finally yielded to-day to my persuasions, she has consented to leave the chamber of sorrow where the sight of her child brings to her only the most feeble consolations; do you see her there? she seems to you charming,—well, dear beauty, judge what she should be when happiness and love lend their lustre to that face now faded."

The countess turned her head silently, and seemed a prey to grave reflections. The duchess led her to the door of the card-room; then, after having looked around it as if she were seeking for some one there:

"And look there at Soulanges!" she said to the young coquette in the deep tones of her voice.

The countess shuddered when she perceived in the most obscure corner of the salon the pale and contracted face of Soulanges, leaning on the cushions: the relaxation of all his limbs and the immobility of his forehead betrayed the extent of his unhappiness; the players came and went before him without paying any more attention to him than if he were dead. The picture presented by the wife in tears and the husband bitter and sombre,

separated one from the other in the middle of this festival, like the two halves of a tree rent by the lightning, had in it, perhaps, something prophetic for the countess. She feared to see in it an image of the vengeances which the future was guarding for her. Her heart was not yet sufficiently withered for sensitiveness and compassion to be completely banished from it, she pressed the hand of the duchess, thanking her by one of those smiles which have a certain infantile grace.

"My dear child," said the old woman in her ear, "reflect hereafter that we know as well how to repulse the homages of men as to attract them to us—. She is yours, if you are not an idiot."

These last words were whispered by Madame de Lansac in the ear of Colonel Montcornet, whilst the beautiful countess gave herself up to the compassion with which she was filled by the aspect of Soulanges, for she loved him still sincerely enough to wish to restore him to happiness, and she promised herself inwardly to employ the irresistible power which her seduction still gave her over him to restore him to his wife.

"Oh! how I am going to preach to him," she said to Madame de Lansac.

"Do nothing of the kind, my dear!" cried the duchess regaining her sofa; "choose for yourself a good husband and close your door to my nephew. Do not even offer him your friendship. Believe me, my child, a woman does not receive from another woman the heart of a husband, she is a

hundred times more happy in believing that she has reconquered it herself. In bringing my niece here, I thought to have given her an excellent means of regaining the affection of her husband. I only ask you, in the way of co-operation, to entice the general."

And when the duchess showed to her the friend of the Maître des Requêtes, the countess smiled.

"Well, madame, do you know finally the name of that unknown?" asked the baron of the countess, with an air of pique when she was alone.

"Yes," said Madame de Vaudremont, looking at the Maître des Requêtes.

Her face expressed as much of subtlety as of gayety. The smile which diffused life on her lips and on her cheeks, the humid light of her eyes, were like those wandering fires which deceive the nocturnal traveler. Martial, who believed himself still loved, then assumed that coquettish attitude in which a man balances himself so complacently in the company of her whom he loves, and said in a fatuous manner:

"And you would not wish to quarrel with me if I seemed to be willing to give a great price to learn this name?"

"And you would not wish to quarrel with me," replied Madame de Vaudremont, "if, through a remnant of love, I did not tell it to you, and if I forbid you to make the least advance toward that young lady? You would risk your life, perhaps."

"Madame, to lose your good graces, is not that to lose more than life?"

"Martial," said the countess severely, "it is Madame de Soulanges. The husband will blow out your brains, if you have any, however."

"Ah! ha!" replied the fop, laughing, "the colonel will let him live in peace, who has carried away your heart from him, and he will fight for his wife? What a reversion of principles! I pray you, permit me to dance with this little lady. You could thus have the proof of the small amount of love which was contained for you in that heart of snow; for, if the colonel take it ill that I dance with his wife, after having permitted that with you, I—"

"But she is married."

"An obstacle the more that I shall have the pleasure of overcoming."

"But she loves her husband."

"A pleasant objection!"

"Ah!" said the countess with a bitter smile, "you punish us equally for our faults and our repentances."

"Do not be displeased," said Martial quickly. "Oh! I entreat you, forgive me. See, I no longer think of Madame de Soulanges."

"You would quite merit that I should send you to her."

"I am going," said the baron, laughing, "and I will return more in love with you than ever. You will see that the prettiest woman in the world cannot take possession of a heart which belongs to you."

"That is to say that you wish to win the colonel's horse."

"Ah! the traitor," he replied laughing and menacing with his finger his friend who smiled.

The colonel came up, the baron yielded to him his place by the side of the countess, to whom he said with a sardonic air:

"Madame, here is a man who boasted of being able to gain your good graces in a single evening."

He applauded himself as he went away, for having irritated the self-love of the countess and done Montcornet an ill-service; but, notwithstanding his habitual shrewdness, he had not been conscious of the irony in the words of Madame de Vaudremont, and did not perceive that she had made as many steps toward his friend as his friend had toward her, although unknown to each other. At the moment when the Maitre des Requêtes approached in a tentative manner the candelabra under which the Comtesse de Soulanges, pale and fearing, seemed to live only by her eyes, her husband came near the door of the salon, his eyes blazing with passion. The old duchess, watchful of everything, hastened towards her nephew, requested him to give her his arm and to conduct her to her carriage, pretending a mortal weariness and flattering herself with thus preventing an unpleasant explosion. As she departed, she made a curious sign of intelligence to her niece in designating to her the enterprising cavalier who was about to accost her, and this sign seemed to say to her: "There he is, avenge yourself."

Madame de Vaudremont caught this look from the

aunt to the niece, a sudden light illumined her soul, she feared to be the dupe of this old lady so wise and so crafty in intrigue.

"That perfidious duchess," she said to herself, "has perhaps thought it amusing to give me a moral lesson in playing me some evil trick of her own."

With this thought in her mind, the self-love of Madame de Vaudremont was, perhaps, even more strongly interested than her curiosity in unraveling the thread of this intrigue. The inward preoccupation to which she was a prey did not leave her mistress of herself. The colonel, interpreting to his own advantage the constraint visible in the discourse and the manners of the countess, became in consequence only more ardent and more pressing. The blasé old diplomats, who amused themselves by observing the expressions of the various countenances, had never before met with so many intrigues to follow or to guess at. The passions which agitated this double couple were represented in varying shades on other faces at every step and in great diversity in these animated salons. The spectacle of so many living passions, all these quarrels of love, these sweet vengeances, these cruel favors, these inflamed looks, all this burning life diffused around them, made them feel only the more keenly their own inability. Finally, the baron was able to take his seat near the Comtesse de Soulanges. His eyes wandered surreptitiously to a neck as fresh as the dew, perfumed like a flower of the fields. He admired thus near her, those beauties which had

surprised him from afar. He could see a little foot beautifully shod, measure with his eye a supple and graceful figure. At this period, the women knotted the girdles of their dresses directly under the breasts, in imitation of the Greek statues, a pitiless fashion for those women whose figures were not perfect. In directing his furtive glances on this breast, Martial was ravished with the perfection of the forms of the countess.

"You have not danced once this evening, madame," said he, in a soft and flattering voice; "it is not for want of a cavalier, I imagine?"

"I do not go out into the world at all, I am unknown in it," replied coldly Madame de Soulanges, who had not in the least comprehended the look by which her aunt had just invited her to please the baron.

Martial then brought into play, as if by accident, the fine diamond which ornamented his left hand. The fires which shot from the stone seemed to throw a sudden light into the soul of the young countess, who blushed and looked at the baron with an indefinable expression.

"Do you like dancing?" asked the Provençal, endeavoring to renew the conversation.

"Oh! very much, monsieur."

At this strange reply, their looks met. The young man, surprised at the penetrating accent which awoke in his heart a vague hope, had suddenly interrogated the eyes of the young woman.

"Well, madame, is it not a temerity on my part

to propose myself as your partner for the first contradance?"

An ingenuous confusion reddened the white cheeks of the countess.

"But, monsieur, I have already refused one dancer, an officer—"

"Was it that big colonel of cavalry whom you see over there?"

"Yes, the same."

"Oh! he is my friend, you need fear nothing. Will you accord me the favor which I dare to hope?"

"Yes, monsieur."

This voice betrayed an emotion so new and so profound that the blasé soul of the Maître des Requêtes was shaken by it. He felt himself overcome by the timidity of a schoolboy, lost his assurance, his meridional head took fire; he wished to speak, his expressions seemed to himself without grace compared to the fine and spiritual repartees of Madame de Soulanges. It was fortunate for him that the contradance began. On his feet, by the side of his beautiful dancer, he felt himself more at his ease. For many men, the dance is a part of their character; they think by displaying the graces of their body to affect the hearts of women more strongly than by their wit. The Provençal doubtless wished to employ at this moment all his powers of seduction, to judge by the pretension of all his movements and his gestures. He had brought his conquest to that quadrille to dance

in which, rather than in any other, the most brilliant women of the salon attached a chimerical importance. Whilst the orchestra executed the prelude of the first figure, the baron experienced an incredible satisfaction of pride when, passing in review the dancers ranged along the lines of this redoubtable square, he perceived that the toilet of Madame de Soulanges defied even that of Madame de Vaudremont, who, by a chance that was perhaps not accidental, made with the colonel the vis-à-vis of the baron and of the lady in blue. All looks were turned for the moment on Madame de Soulanges; a flattering murmur announced that she was the subject of conversation of each dancer with his partner. The glances of envy and of admiration directed at her were so numerous that the young woman, ashamed of a triumph which she seemed to refuse, lowered her eyes modestly, blushed and became only the more charming. If she raised her white eyelids, it was to look at her intoxicated partner, as if she wished to bring to him the glory of these homages and say to him that she preferred his to all others; her coquetry was full of innocence, or, rather, she seemed to yield herself to that ingenuous admiration by which love commences with that good faith which is only to be met with in young hearts. When she danced, the spectators could easily believe that she displayed these graces only for Martial; and although modest and unused to the manners of salons, she knew how, as well as the most experienced coquette, to raise her eyes to

him at the right moment, to lower them with a feigned modesty. When the new rules of a contradance invented by the dancer Trénis, and to which he gave his name, brought Martial before the colonel:

"I have won your horse," he said to him, laughing.

"Yes, but you have lost eighty thousand francs income," replied the colonel, indicating Madame de Vaudremont.

"Eh! what does that matter to me?" replied Martial; "Madame de Soulanges is worth millions."

At the end of this contradance, there was more than one whispering in more than one ear. The least pretty women talked morality with their partners apropos of the budding liaison of Martial and of the Comtesse de Soulanges. The most beautiful were astonished at such ease. The men could not understand the happiness of the little Maître des Requêtes, in whom they found nothing very seductive. Some indulgent women said that it was not necessary to be in a hurry to judge the countess,—young women would be very unfortunate if an expressive look or some steps gracefully executed sufficed to compromise a woman. Martial alone knew the extent of his happiness. In the last figure, when the ladies in the quadrille had to form the *moulinet*, his fingers pressed those of the countess, and he thought he felt, through the fine and perfumed texture of the gloves, that the fingers of the young woman responded to his amorous appeal.

"Madame," he said to her when the contradance was ended, "do not return into that odious corner where you have buried up to this time your face and your toilet. Is admiration the only revenue which you should draw from the diamonds which adorn your neck so white and your tresses so well arranged? Come and take a promenade in the salons in order to enjoy the fête and yourself."

Madame de Soulanges followed her seducer, who thought that she would belong to him all the more surely if he succeeded in making his triumph public. Together they then took several turns through the groups which crowded the salons of the hôtel. The Comtesse de Soulanges, with an unquiet air, stopped an instant before entering each salon, and only passed into it after having extended her neck to take a look at all the men. This fear, which completed the joy of the little Maître des Requêtes, seemed calmed only when he had said to his trembling companion: "Reassure yourself, *he* is not there." They thus arrived finally at an immense gallery of paintings, situated in a wing of the hôtel and where there might be enjoyed in advance the magnificent aspect of a table spread with meats and fruits for three hundred people. As the repast was about to commence, Martial drew the countess toward an oval boudoir opening on the gardens, and where the rarest flowers and a few shrubs formed a perfumed grove under some brilliant blue draperies. Here the murmur of the festival died away. The countess shuddered on entering, and obstinately

refused to follow the young man into it; but after having turned her eyes on a mirror, she doubtless saw that there were others present, for she went and seated herself gracefully on an ottoman.

"This place is delightful," she said, admiring a hanging of an azure blue ornamented with pearls.

"Everything in it is love and voluptuousness," said the young man, greatly moved.

Profiting by the mysterious light which pervaded the apartment, he looked at the countess and surprised on her softly agitated countenance an expression of trouble, of modesty, of desire, which enchanted him. The young woman smiled, and this smile seemed to put an end to the contest of feelings which raged in her heart; she took, in the most seducing manner, the left hand of her adorer, and slipped from his finger the ring on which her eyes had been fixed.

"What a beautiful diamond!" she said with the naïve expression of a young girl who allows herself to perceive the delights of a first temptation.

Martial, moved by the involuntary but intoxicating caress which the countess had given him in disengaging the ring, turned on her eyes as brilliant as the stone.

"Wear it," he said to her, "in memory of this celestial hour and for the love of—"

She looked at him with so much ecstasy that he did not finish, he kissed her hand.

"You give it to me?" she said, with an air of astonishment.

"I would like to offer you the entire world."

"You are not jesting?" she replied, with a voice changed by a too lively satisfaction.

"Do you accept only my diamond?"

"You will never take it back from me?" she asked.

"Never."

She put the ring on her finger. Martial, counting upon a near happiness, made a gesture to pass his hand around the waist of the countess, when she rose suddenly and said in a clear voice, without any emotion:

"Monsieur, I accept this diamond with so much the less scruple that it belongs to me."

The Maître des Requêtes sat dumfounded.

"Monsieur de Soulanges took it lately from my toilet table, and told me he had lost it."

"You are in error, madame," said Martial, with a vexed air, "I had it from Madame de Vaudremont."

"Precisely," she replied, smiling. "My husband borrowed this ring from me, gave it to her, she made a present of it to you; my ring has traveled, that is all. This ring will tell me perhaps all of which I am ignorant, and will instruct me in the secret of always pleasing. Monsieur," she resumed, "if it had not belonged to me, you may be sure that I would not have risked paying for it so dearly, for a young woman is, it is said, in peril near you. But wait," she added, touching a spring hidden under the stone, "the hair of Monsieur de Soulanges is still there."

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MADAME DE SOULANGES AND MARTIAL.

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She went out into the salons with such quickness that it seemed to be useless to undertake to rejoin her; and, moreover, Martial, confounded, did not find in himself any disposition to undertake the adventure. The laugh of Madame de Soulanges had found an echo in the boudoir, where the young fop perceived, between two shrubs, the colonel and Madame de Vaudremont, who laughed with all their hearts.

"Do you wish my horse to ride, after your conquest?" said the colonel to him.

The good grace with which the baron supported the pleasantries with which Madame de Vaudremont and Montcornet overwhelmed him, secured for him their discretion concerning this evening, in which his friend bartered his war horse against a young, rich and pretty woman.

While the Comtesse de Soulanges was traversing the distance which separated the Chaussée-d'Antin from the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where she lived, her soul was a prey to the liveliest anxiety. Before quitting the Hôtel de Gondreville, she had traversed all the salons without encountering either her aunt or her husband, who had departed without her. Frightful presentiments came to torment her ingenuous soul. A discreet witness of the suffering experienced by her husband from the day on which Madame de Vaudremont had attached him to her triumphal car, she had hoped with confidence that his near repentance would bring him back to her. Thus it was with an incredible repugnance that she

had consented to the plan formed by her aunt, Madame de Lansac, and at this moment she feared to have committed a fault. This evening had saddened her pure soul. Frightened at first by the suffering and sombre air of the Comte de Soulanges, she was still more so by the beauty of her rival, and the corruption of the world had contracted her heart. While passing over the Pont Royal, she threw away the profaned hairs which were under the diamond, formerly offered as the gage of a pure love. She wept in recalling to herself the keen sufferings to which she had been so long a prey, and shuddered more than once in reflecting that the duty of wives who wish to obtain peace in the household obliges them to bury at the bottom of their hearts, and without complaining, an anguish as cruel as her own.

"Alas!" she said to herself, "what can they do, the women who do not love? Where is the source of their indulgence? I would not know how to believe, as my aunt says, that reason alone is sufficient to sustain them in such devotion."

She was still sighing when her footman lowered the handsome steps of her carriage, from which she stepped lightly into the vestibule of her hôtel. She mounted the stairway precipitately, and when she arrived in her chamber, she shuddered with terror in seeing her husband seated near the chimney-piece.

"Since when, my dear, have you been going to balls without me, without notifying me?" he

asked, in an altered voice. "You should know that a wife is always out of place without her husband. You were singularly compromised in the obscure corner in which you had placed yourself."

"Oh! my good Léon," she said in a caressing voice, "I was not able to resist the happiness of looking at you without your seeing me. My aunt took me to this ball, and I was very happy there!"

These accents disarmed the looks of the count of their factitious severity, for he had been keenly reproaching himself while apprehending the return of his wife, doubtless informed at the ball of an infidelity which he had hoped he could conceal from her, and, according to the usages of lovers who feel themselves culpable, he had endeavored, by beginning a quarrel with the countess, to avoid her too just anger. He looked silently at his wife, who in her brilliant adornments seemed to him more beautiful than ever. Happy to see her husband smiling and to find him at this hour in a chamber into which for some time he had been coming less frequently, the countess looked at him so tenderly that she reddened and lowered her eyes. This clemency intoxicated Soulanges so much the more that this scene succeeded the torments which he had experienced during the ball; he seized the hand of his wife and kissed it with gratitude: is there not often gratitude to be met with in love?

"Hortense, what have you on your finger that hurts my mouth so much?" he asked, laughing.

"It is my diamond, which you said you had lost, and which I have found again."

General Montcornet did not marry Madame de Vaudremont, notwithstanding the good terms on which the two lived for some time, for she was one of the victims of the frightful conflagration which rendered forever celebrated the ball given by the Ambassador of Austria on the occasion of the marriage of the Emperor Napoléon with the daughter of the Emperor Francis II.

July, 1829.

A STUDY OF WOMAN

TO THE MARQUIS JEAN-CHARLES DI NEGRO

A STUDY OF WOMAN

*

The Marquise de Listomère is one of those young women who have been reared in the spirit of the Restoration. She has principles, she fasts, she goes to communion, and, very much adorned, to balls, to the Bouffons, to the Opéra; her spiritual director permits her to ally the profane and the sacred. Always in good order with the Church and with the world, she offers an image of the present time, which seems to have taken the word *legality* for a motto. The conduct of the marquise presents precisely enough devotion to secure the attainment under a new Maintenon of the sombre piety of the last days of Louis XIV., and enough worldliness to warrant the adoption, with equal facility, of the gallant manners of the first days of that reign, if it could return. At the present moment, she is virtuous by design, or perhaps by taste. Married for the last seven years to the Marquis de Listomère, one of those deputies who are waiting for the peerage, she perhaps believes it possible to serve also by her conduct, the ambition of her family. Some women are waiting to judge her until the moment

when Monsieur de Listomère shall be a peer of France, and when she shall have attained the age of thirty-six, a period of life at which the greater number of women perceive that they are the dupes of the social laws. The marquis is a man sufficiently insignificant: he stands well at Court, his qualities are negative, like his defects; the first can no more give him a reputation for virtue than the others can lend him that species of brilliancy which springs from vices. As a deputy, he never speaks, but he votes *well;* he conducts himself in his household as in the Chamber. Thus he passes for being the best husband in France. If he is not susceptible to self-exaltation, he never scolds, at least unless he is made to wait. His friends have named him *cloudy weather.* There is not to be met with, in fact, in him either too bright a light or too complete obscurity. He is like all the ministers who have succeeded each other in France since the Charter. For a woman of principles, it would be difficult to fall into better hands. Is it not a great deal, for a virtuous woman, to have espoused a man incapable of stupidities? There have been met with dandies who have had the impertinence to press lightly the hand of the marquise in dancing with her, they have gained nothing but contemptuous looks, and all of them have experienced that insulting indifference which, like the frost in springtime, destroys the germs of the most beautiful hopes. The handsome ones, the witty, the fops, the men with sentiments who nourish themselves by sucking the heads of

their canes, those with a great name or a great fame, personages of high and of low degree, all have paled before her. She has conquered the right to converse as long and as often as she wishes with the men who seem to her to be intelligent, without laying herself open to slighting comments. Certain coquettish women are capable of following this plan during seven years in order to satisfy their fantasies later; but to attribute this concealed purpose to the Marquise de Listomère would be to calumniate her. I have had the honor of seeing this phœnix of marchionesses; she talks well, I know how to listen, I have pleased her, I go to her soirées. Such is the end of my ambition. Neither ugly nor pretty, Madame de Listomère has white teeth, a brilliant complexion and very red lips; she is tall and well-made; she has a little, slender foot, and does not thrust it out; her eyes, far from being dimmed, as are almost all the Parisian eyes, have a soft brilliancy which becomes magical if by chance she grows animated. The presence of a soul may be divined under this indecisive form. If she becomes interested in the conversation, she displays in it a grace smothered under the precautions of a cold appearance, and then she is charming. She does not wish any success and she obtains it. One always finds that which is not sought for. This phrase is too often true not to be changed into a proverb some day. This will be the moral of this adventure, which I would not permit myself to relate if it were not talked about, at this moment, in all the salons of Paris.

The Marquise de Listomère danced about a month ago with a young man as modest as he is volatile, full of good qualities, and permitting only his defects to be seen; he is passionate and he makes a jest of passion; he has talent and he conceals it; with the aristocrats, he is a learned man, and with the learned men, an aristocrat. Eugène de Rastignac is one of those very sensible young men who try everything and who seem to feel men in order to know what the future will bring them. While waiting for the age of ambition, he mocks at everything; he has gracefulness and originality, two qualities rare because they exclude each other. He talked, without any premeditation of success, with the Marquise de Listomère about a half-hour. In enjoying the caprices of a conversation which, after having commenced by the opera of *William Tell*, finally arrived at the duties of wives, he had more than once looked at the marchioness in such a manner as to embarrass her; then he left her and did not speak to her again during the evening; he danced, sat down at écarté, lost some money, and went home to bed. I have the honor to affirm to you that this is all that took place. I do not add, I do not conceal, anything.

The next morning, Rastignac awoke late, remained in his bed, where he yielded himself doubtless to some of those morning reveries during which a young man slips himself like a sylph under more than one curtain of silk, of cashmere, or of cotton. In these moments, the heavier the body is with

sleep, the more alert is the mind. Finally, Rastignac arose, without yawning too much, as do badly brought up people, rang for his valet de chambre, caused tea to be brought, drank of it immoderately, which will not appear extraordinary to those persons who like tea; but, to explain this circumstance to those who do not accept it as a panacea for indigestion, I will add that Eugène was a writer,—he was comfortably seated, and had his feet oftener on his andirons than in his foot-warmer. Oh! to have one's feet on the polished bar which unites the two griffins of a fender, and to think on one's loves when one rises and when one is in one's dressing-gown, is something so delicious, that I regret infinitely not having either mistress or andirons or dressing-gown. When I have all those, I will not relate my observations, I will profit by them.

The first letter which Eugène wrote was finished in a quarter of an hour; he folded it, sealed it, and left it in front of him without adding the address. The second letter, commenced at eleven o'clock, was not finished till noon. The four pages were full.

"That woman runs in my head," said he, folding the second epistle, which he left before him, intending to add the address, after having finished his involuntary reverie.

He crossed the two skirts of his flowered dressing-gown, put his feet on a stool, thrust his hands into the pockets of his pantaloons of red cashmere and threw himself back in a delightful chair with projecting ear-pieces of which the seat and the back described the

comfortable angle of a hundred and twenty degrees. He took no more tea and remained motionless, his eyes fixed on the gilded hand which tipped the handle of his fire shovel, without seeing either hand, or shovel, or gilding. He did not even stir the fire. An immense fault! Is it not a very keen pleasure to agitate the fire when we think of women? Our wit lends phrases to the little blue tongues of flame which suddenly disengage themselves and babble on the hearth. We are able to interpret the powerful and brusque language of a *bourguignon.*

At this word, let us stop and place here for the benefit of the ignorant an explanation which is due to a very distinguished etymologist who has desired not to have his name given. *Bourguignon*—Burgundian—is the popular and symbolical name given, since the reign of Charles VI., to those noisy detonations, the effect of which is to send out suddenly, on a carpet or on a gown, a little live coal, a small element of conflagration. The fire liberates, it is said, a bubble of air which a worm has left in the heart of the wood. *Inde amor, inde burgundus.* You tremble to see roll down like an avalanche the coal which you have so industriously endeavored to arrange between two flaming billets. Oh! to stir the fire when one loves, is not that to develop materially one's thoughts?

It was at this moment that I entered Eugène's room; he gave a great start and said to me:

"Ah! there you are, my dear Horace. How long have you been there?"

"I have just arrived."

"Ah!"

He took the two letters, addressed them and rang for his domestic.

"Take these and deliver them."

And Joseph went away without making any observations; excellent domestic!

We commenced to talk about the expedition to the Morea, in which I desired to be employed as a doctor. Eugène observed to me that I should lose a great deal in leaving Paris, and we spoke of indifferent things. I do not think that any one will bear me malice if I suppress our conversation.

At the hour when the Marquise de Listomère rose, about two o'clock in the afternoon, her maid, Caroline, handed her a letter; she read it while Caroline was dressing her hair—an imprudence which a great many young women commit—:

O dear angel of love, treasure of life and of happiness!

At these words, the marchioness was going to throw the letter into the fire; but there passed through her head a whim which every virtuous woman will comprehend perfectly, and which was to see how a man who commenced in this fashion would finish. She read it. When she had ended the fourth page, she let her arms fall like a person fatigued.

"Caroline, go and find out who brought this letter here."

"Madame, I received it from the valet de chambre of Monsieur le Baron de Rastignac."

There was a long silence.

"Does madame wish to dress?" asked Caroline.

"No."

"It must be that he is very impertinent!" thought the marchioness.

I entreat all women to imagine for themselves the commentary.

Madame de Listomère terminated hers by the formal resolution to show Monsieur Eugène to her door, and, if she met him in society, to show him more than disdain; for his insolence could not be compared with any of those which the marchioness had ended by forgiving. She wished at first to keep the letter; but, after due reflection, she burned it.

"Madame has just received a famous declaration of love, and she read it!" said Caroline to the housekeeper.

"I would never have thought that of madame," replied the old woman, quite astonished.

That evening, the countess went to the house of the Marquis de Beauséant, where Rastignac would probably appear. This was a Saturday. The Marquis de Beauséant being a distant relative of Monsieur de Rastignac, this young man could not fail to appear during the evening. At two o'clock in the morning, Madame de Listomère, who had remained only to overwhelm Eugène with her coldness, had vainly waited for him. A man of wit, Stendhal,

had had the grotesque idea of designating as *crystallization* the processes of the reflections of the marchioness before, during, and after this evening. Four days later, Eugène scolded his valet de chambre.

"Ah there! Joseph, I shall be forced to send you away, my lad!"

"What do you say, monsieur?"

"You do nothing but stupidities. Where did you carry the two letters which I gave you on Friday?"

Joseph became dumb. Like some statue in the porch of a cathedral, he remained motionless, entirely absorbed in the working of his imagination. All of a sudden he smiled inanely and said:

"Monsieur, one was for Madame la Marquise de Listomère, Rue Saint-Dominique, and the other, for the attorney of Monsieur—"

"Are you certain of what you are saying?"

Joseph remained quite dumfounded. I saw clearly that it was necessary that I should interfere, I who, as it happened, found myself there again.

"Joseph is right," I said.

Eugène turned to me.

"I read the addresses quite involuntarily, and—"

"And," said Eugène interrupting me, "one of those letters was not for Madame de Nucingen?"

"No, by all the devils! Thus I thought, my dear fellow, that your heart had pirouetted from the Rue Saint-Lazare to the Rue Saint-Dominique."

Eugène struck his forehead with the palm of his hand and commenced to smile. Joseph saw plainly that the fault was not on his side.

Now, these are the moralities which all young people should meditate upon. *First fault:* Eugène found it pleasant to make Madame de Listomère laugh at the mistake which had brought to her a love letter which was not intended for her. *Second fault:* He did not go to see Madame de Listomère till four days after the adventure, thus permitting the thoughts of a virtuous young woman to crystallize. There may be found ten more faults which it is necessary to pass over in silence, in order to give the ladies the pleasure of stating them *ex professo* to those who do not divine them. Eugène arrives at the door of the marquise, but when he wishes to enter, the concierge stops him and tells him that Madame la Marquise has gone out. As he got into his carriage again, the marquis entered.

"Come in, Eugène! my wife is at home."

Oh! you must excuse the marquis. A husband, however good he may be, attains with difficulty to perfection. As he mounted the stairway, Rastignac then perceived the ten faults of worldly logic which were to be found in this passage of the beautiful book of his life.

When Madame de Listomère saw her husband entering with Eugène, she could not prevent herself from reddening. The young baron observed the sudden color. If the most modest man preserves still a little fund of fatuousness of which he does not strip himself any more than the woman separates herself from her fatal coquetry, who could then blame Eugène for having said to himself:

"What! this fortress also?" And he struck an attitude *in his cravat.* Although the young persons are not very avaricious, they all like to put one head the more into their cabinet of medals.

Monsieur de Listomère seized the *Gazette de France* which he perceived on a corner of the chimney-piece and went toward the embrasure of a window to acquire, the journalist aiding him, an opinion of his own on the state of France. A woman, even a prude, does not remain long embarrassed even in the most difficult situation in which she can find herself; it seems that she has always in her hand the fig leaf which was given to her by our mother Eve. Thus, when Eugène, interpreting favorably for his vanity the orders given at the door, bowed to Madame de Listomère with an air passably deliberate, she knew how to veil all her thoughts by one of those feminine smiles which are more impenetrable than is the word of a king.

"Are you indisposed, madame? You had closed your door."

"No, monsieur."

"You are going out, perhaps?"

"Not now."

"You were waiting for some one?"

"No one."

"If my visit is indiscreet, you have only to call to account Monsieur le Marquis. I had obeyed your mysterious order when he, himself, introduced me into the sanctuary."

"Monsieur de Listomère was not in my confidence.

It is not always prudent to take a husband into certain secrets—"

The firm and gentle accent with which the marchioness pronounced these words and the imposing regard which she threw upon him, led Rastignac to infer that he had been a little too prompt in striking an attitude *in his cravat.*

"Madame, I understand you," he said, laughing; "I should then doubly congratulate myself for having met Monsieur le Marquis; he has procured me an opportunity to present to you a justification which would be full of dangers if you were not goodness itself."

The marchioness looked at the young baron with a sufficiently astonished air, but she replied with dignity:

"Monsieur, silence would be, on your part, the best of excuses. As for myself, I promise you the most entire forgetfulness—a pardon which you scarcely deserve."

"Madame," said Eugène quickly, "pardon is unnecessary where there has been no offence. The letter," he added in a low voice, "which you received and which must have appeared to you so very inconvenient, was not destined for you."

The marchioness could not prevent a smile, she wished to have been offended.

"Why lie?" she replied with a disdainfully sprightly air, but in a sufficiently gentle voice. "Now that I have scolded you, I will willingly laugh at a stratagem which is not without malice. I know

some poor women who would be caught by it.—'*Dieu!* how he loves!' they would say."

The marchioness commenced to laugh in a forced manner and added with an indulgent air:

"If we wish to remain friends, let there be no more question of mistakes of which I cannot be the dupe."

"Upon my honor, madame, you are much more so than you think," replied Eugène.

"But what are you talking about there?" asked Monsieur de Listomère who, for the last moment, had been listening to the conversation, without being able to perceive the meaning of it.

"Oh! this is not interesting to you," replied the marchioness.

Monsieur de Listomère resumed tranquilly the reading of his newspaper and said:

"Ah! Madame de Mortsauf is dead: your poor brother is doubtless at Clochegourde."

"Do you know, monsieur," replied the marchioness, turning towards Eugène, "that you have just uttered an impertinence?"

"If I were not acquainted with the rigor of your principles," he replied, naïvely, "I should think that you wished either to give me ideas which I forbid myself, or to wrest my secret from me. Perhaps you are still wishing to amuse yourself with me."

The marchioness smiled. This smile made Eugène impatient.

"Oh! that you might, madame," he said, "persist in believing in an offence which I have not

committed! and I wish very ardently that chance may not enable you to discover in the world the person who should have read that letter—"

"Eh! what! it will always be Madame de Nucingen?" cried Madame de Listomère, more curious to penetrate a secret than to avenge herself for the epigrams of the young man.

Eugène reddened. It is necessary to be more than twenty-five not to redden on being reproached with the stupidity of a fidelity at which the women mock, in order that they may not show how envious they are of it. Nevertheless, he said with sufficient coolness:

"Why not, madame?"

These are the faults that one commits at twenty-five. This confidence caused a violent emotion in Madame de Listomère; but Eugène did not yet know how to analyze the countenance of a woman in looking at it hastily or sidewise. The lips only of the marchioness had paled. Madame de Listomère rang to ask for some firewood, and thus constrained Rastignac to rise to depart.

"If this is so," then said the marchioness, arresting Eugène with a cold and composed air, "it would be difficult for you to explain to me, monsieur, by what chance my name found itself under your pen. It is not with the address written on a letter as with your neighbor's hat which you may carelessly take for your own on leaving a ball."

Eugène, out of countenance, looked at the marchioness with an air at once foppish and stupid, he

felt that he was becoming ridiculous, stammered some schoolboyish phrase and departed.

A few days later, the marchionesss acquired irrefutable proofs of Eugène's veracity. For the last sixteen days she has not been out in society.

The marquis says to all those who ask him the reason for this change:

"My wife has gastritis."

I, who have been called in to attend her and who know her secret, I know that she has only a little nervous crisis of which she takes advantage to remain at home.

Paris, February, 1830.

ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN

DEDICATED TO LÉON GOZLAN

As a testimonial of literary fraternity.

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ON THE BANKS OF THE LOIR.

"'We all became used to his sublime; he took the key of the door with him, and we no longer sat up for him. He lodged in the house which one hears in the Rue des Cassettes. At that time, one of our stable boys told us that one evening when he was taking the horses into the water, he thought he saw the grandee of Spain swimming far out in the river.'"

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ON THE BANKS OF THE LOIR.

"We all became used to his whims; he took the key of the door with him, and we no longer sat up for him. He lodged in the house which we have in the Rue des Casernes. At that time, one of our stable boys told us that one evening when he was taking the horses into the water, he thought he saw the grandee of Spain swimming far out in the river."

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At Paris, there are to be met with almost always two soirées at balls or routs.—In the first place, an official soirée at which are present the persons invited, the young women who go there only for one sole person. When each woman is assured that she is the most beautiful for this person and that this opinion has been shared by several others, after the exchange of insignificant phrases like this:—"Do you expect to go early to the Champlâtre?" "Will you be there?" "Are you going to the Lorenzi's?" "Shall you be at the Duchesse de Carigliano's?" "Who is that little woman who has so many diamonds?" or, after having launched epigrammatical phrases, which give a passing pleasure and leave wounds of long duration, the groups thin out, the indifferent go away, the candles burn down into their sockets. The mistress of the house then stops several artists, cheerful people, friends, saying to them:—"Do not go, we are going to have a little supper." The company assembles in a little salon. The second, the true soirée takes place; a soirée in which, as under the ancient régime, each

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ON THE BANKS OF THE LOIR.

"'We all became used to his whims: he took the key of the door with him, and we no longer sat up for him. He lodged in the house which we have in the Rue de la Casernes. At that time, one of our stable boys told us that one evening when he was taking the horses into the water, he thought he saw the grandee of Spain swimming far out in the river."

ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN

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At Paris, there are to be met with almost always two soirées at balls or routs. In the first place, an official soirée at which are present the persons invited, a gay world which bores itself. Each one poses for his neighbor. The greater number of the young women go there only for one sole person. When each woman is assured that she is the most beautiful for this person and that this opinion has been shared by several others, after the exchange of insignificant phrases like this:—"Do you expect to go early to La Crampade?"—"Madame de Portenduère has sung finely!"—"Who is that little woman who has so many diamonds?" or, after having launched epigrammatical phrases, which give a passing pleasure and leave wounds of long duration, the groups thin out, the indifferent go away, the candles burn down into their sockets. The mistress of the house then stops several artists, cheerful people, friends, saying to them:—"Do not go, we are going to have a little supper." The company assembles in a little salon. The second, the true soirée takes place; a soirée in which, as under the ancient régime, each

one understands what is said, in which the conversation is general, in which one is obliged to have wit and to contribute to the general amusement. Everything has an air of relief, a frank laugh succeeds to those stiff and formal airs which, in society, sadden the prettiest faces. In short, pleasure commences there where the rout finishes. The rout, that cold review of luxury, that defile of self-loves in grand costumes, is one of those English inventions that tend to *mechanicalize* the other nations. England seems to be determined that the entire world shall bore itself as she does, and as much as she does. This second soirée is then in France, in some houses, a happy profession of the ancient spirit of our joyous country; but, unfortunately, but few houses make this profession, and the reason of it is very simple,—if to-day there are no longer many little suppers, it is because, under no régime, have there been fewer people settled, fixed, who have succeeded, than under the reign of Louis Philippe, in which the Revolution has recommenced. All the world runs after some object, or trots after fortune. Time has become the dearest commodity, no one can then give himself up to that prodigious prodigality of not returning to his own house till the next morning, to sleep late. The second soirée is, then, no longer to be found but among some women sufficiently rich to open their houses; and, since July, 1830, these women may be counted in Paris. Notwithstanding the mute opposition of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, two or three women, among

whom may be found Madame la Marquise d'Espard and Mademoiselle des Touches, have not been willing to renounce any portion of the influence which they had over Paris, and have not closed their salons. The salon of Mademoiselle des Touches, the hôtel of Madame d'Espard, celebrated from another cause in Paris, is the last asylum in which has taken refuge the French spirit of other days, with its hidden profundity, its thousand détours and its exquisite politeness. There, you may still observe gracefulness in the manners, notwithstanding the conventions of politeness, freedom in the gossip, despite the reserve natural to educated people, and, above all, generosity in the ideas. There, no one thinks of reserving his thoughts for a drama; and, in a recital, no one sees a possible book to make. And, finally, the hideous skeleton of a literature at its last gasp does not rise up, apropos of some happy sally or of an interesting subject. The memory of one of these soirées has particularly remained with me, less because of a confidence in which the illustrious De Marsay opened one of the most profound depths of the feminine heart, than because of the observations to which his recital gave rise on the changes which have taken place in the French woman since the fatal Revolution of July.

During this soirée, chance had brought together several persons whose incontestable merits have procured for them European reputations. This is not a flattery addressed to France, for several strangers were amongst us. The men who were

the most brilliant were not, on the other hand, the most celebrated. Ingenious repartees, subtle observations, excellent jests, paintings designed with a brilliant clearness, sparkled and crowded each other without preparation, were displayed prodigally without disdain as without research, but were deliciously felt and delicately appreciated. People of society are, above all, remarkable by a grace, by a spirit completely artistic. You will encounter elsewhere in Europe elegant manners, cordiality, good fellowship, science; but in Paris only, in this salon and in those of which I have just spoken, abounds that peculiar spirit which gives to all these social qualities an agreeable and delightful unity, a certain indefinable fluvial charm, as it were, which causes this profusion of thoughts, of formulas, of tales, of historic documents, to wander in and out like a stream. Paris only, the capital of taste, knows this science which transforms a conversation into a tourney, in which each species of wit condenses itself into an expression, in which each one utters his phrase and expresses his experience in one word, in which everybody is amused, diverted and exercised. Thus, there only will you exchange your ideas; there, you will not carry, like the dolphin of the fable, some monkey on your shoulders; there, you will be comprehended, and will not run any risk of staking pieces of gold against base money. Finally, there, secrets skilfully betrayed, conversations both light and profound, undulate, turn, change in aspect and in color

at each phrase. The lively criticisms and the precipitant recitals draw out each other. All the eyes listen, the gestures interrogate and the physiognomy responds. In short, there, everything is, in one word, wit and thought. Never had the oral phenomenon which, well studied, well manipulated, makes the power of the actor and of the relater, so completely bewitched me. I was not the only one submitted to these fascinations, and we all passed a delightful evening. The conversation, which merged into story-telling, drew into its hurried course curious confidences, several portraits, a thousand follies, which rendered this ravishing extemporizing entirely untranslatable; but, in leaving to these things their freshness, their natural abruptness, their specious turnings, perhaps you may well understand the charm of a veritable French soirée, taken at the moment in which the most gentle familiarity causes each one to forget his own interests, his special self-love, or, if you wish, his pretensions.

About two o'clock in the morning, at the moment when the supper was ending, there remained around the table only intimate acquaintances, all of them tried by an intercourse of fifteen years, or people of good taste, well bred and who knew the ways of the world. By a tacit but carefully observed agreement, at supper each one renounced his own importance. An absolute equality gave the tone. There was not to be found there, moreover, anyone who was not very proud of being himself.

Mademoiselle des Touches obliges her guests to remain at the table until their departure, after having many times remarked the total change which manifests itself in the intelligences by the change of place. From the dining-room to the salon, the charm is broken. According to Sterne, the ideas of an author who has shaved differ from those which he had before. If Sterne be right, can it not be boldly affirmed that the dispositions of the guests at table are no longer those of the same guests reassembled in the salon? The atmosphere is no longer heady, the eye no longer contemplates the brilliant disorder of the dessert, one has lost the benefits of that softness of spirit, of that benevolence, which takes possession of us when we remain in the particular position of a satisfied man, well established in one of those soft seats such as are furnished to-day. Perhaps one talks more willingly before a dessert, in the company of good wines, during the delightful moment in which each one can put his elbow on the table and his head in his hand. Not only does all the world love to talk at this moment, but also to listen. Digestion, nearly always attentive, is, according to the various characters, either gossipy or silent. Each one, therefore, finds his own particular arrangement. Is not this preamble necessary to initiate you into the charms of the confidential recital by which a celebrated man, since deceased, has painted the innocent Jesuitism of woman with that fineness of observation peculiar to those who have seen many things

and which makes delightful story tellers of statesmen when, like the Princes de Talleyrand and De Metternich, they deign to tell tales?

De Marsay, who had been first minister for the last six months, had already given proofs of a superior capacity. Although those who knew him very well were not surprised to see him displaying all the talents and the divers aptitudes of a statesman, it could still be asked if he would know how to become a great politician, or if he had developed in the fire of circumstances. This question had just been addressed to him with an intention evidently philosophical by a man of wit and of observation whom he had appointed prefect, who had long been a journalist, and who admired him without mingling in his admiration that thread of acid criticism with which, in Paris, a superior man excuses himself from admiring another.

"Has there been in your former life, a fact, a thought, a desire which informed you of your vocation?" said Émile Blondet to him; "for we have all of us, like Newton, our apple which falls and which brings us into the field in which our faculties can display themselves—"

"Yes," replied De Marsay, "I will tell you about it."

The pretty women, the political dandies, the artists, the old men, the intimate friends of De Marsay, all then arranged themselves comfortably, each in his own posture, and looked at the prime minister. Is it necessary to say that there were no

longer any servants about, that the doors were closed and the portières drawn? The silence was so profound that in the court might be heard the murmur of the coachmen, the stampings and the noises which the horses made demanding to be taken back to their stables.

"The statesman, my friends, exists only by one sole quality," said the minister, playing with his knife in mother-of-pearl and gold,—"to know how to be always master of himself, to discount on every occasion each event, however fortuitous it may be; in short, to have, in his interior I, a cold and disinterested being who looks on as a spectator at all the movements of our life, at our passions, at our sentiments, and who gives us, apropos of everything, the decision of a species of moral ready-reckoner."

"You explain to us why it is that the statesman is so rare in France," said the old Lord Dudley.

"From the sentimental point of view, this is horrible," replied the minister. "Thus, when this phenomenon takes place in a young man—Richelieu who warned the day before of the danger of Concini by a letter, slept till noon, when his benefactor was to be killed at ten o'clock—a young man, Pitt or Napoléon, if you please, is he a monstrosity? I became this monster very early, and thanks to a woman."

"I thought," said Madame de Montcornet, smiling, "that we unmade much more politics than we made."

"The monster of whom I am speaking to you is

a monster only because he resists you," replied the narrator, with an ironical inclination of his head.

"If this is to be a love adventure," said the Baronne de Nucingen, "I ask that it be not interrupted by any reflections."

"Reflection is so contrary to it!" cried Joseph Bridau.

"I was seventeen years of age," resumed De Marsay, "the Restoration had established itself, my old friends know how boiling and impetuous I then was. I was in love for the first time, and I can say it to-day, I was one of the prettiest youths in Paris. I had beauty and youth, two advantages due to chance and of which we are as proud as of a conquest. I am obliged to be silent concerning the rest. Like all young men, I loved a woman six years older than myself. Not one of you," said he, casting his eyes around the table, "can suspect her name or recognize her. Ronquerolles only, at that time, penetrated my secret, he kept it well, I should have feared his smile; but he has gone," said the minister, looking around him.

"He did not wish to stay to supper," said Madame de Sérizy."

"For the space of six months, taken possession of by my love, incapable of suspecting that my passion mastered me," resumed the prime minister, "I delivered myself up to those adorable deifications which constitute both the triumph and the fragile happiness of youth. I kept *her* old gloves, I drank an infusion of the flowers that *she* had worn, I

rose in the night to go and see *her* windows. All my blood rushed to my heart in breathing the perfume which *she* had adopted. I was a thousand leagues from the recognition of the fact that women are stoves with marble tops."

"Oh! spare us your horrible sentences!" said Madame de Camps, smiling.

"I would have overwhelmed, I think, with my scorn a philosopher who had published this terrible thought so profoundly just," resumed De Marsay. "You are all too intelligent for me to say more to you on this subject. These few words will recall to you your own follies. A great lady if ever there were one, and a widow without children—Oh! everything was there!—my idol shut herself up to mark my linen, herself, with her hair; in short, she responded to my follies by other follies. Thus, how is it possible not to believe in passion when it is guaranteed by folly? We had, both of us, devoted all our intelligence to hide a so complete and so beautiful love from the eyes of the world; and we succeeded. Consequently, what a charm our escapades had? I will tell you no more of her: then perfect, she is still considered to-day one of the beautiful women of Paris; but at that time one would have got one's self killed to obtain a look from her. She had been left with a sufficient fortune for an adored woman and one who loved, but which the Restoration, from which she acquired a new lustre, rendered scarcely sufficient for her name. In my situation, I had the fatuity to not conceive a suspicion.

Although my jealousy was then of a hundred-and-twenty-Othello power, this terrible sentiment slumbered in me like the gold in its ore. I would have had myself beaten with a stick by my servant if I had been dastard enough to call in question the purity of this angel so frail and so strong, so blonde and so ingenuous, pure, candid, and whose blue eye permitted my look to penetrate to the bottom of her heart with an adorable submission. Never the least hesitation in the attitude, in the look, or in the speech; always white, fresh, and prepared for the well-beloved like the oriental lily of the *Canticle of canticles!*—Ah, my friends!" cried sorrowfully the minister, become again a young man, "it is necessary to strike the head very hard against the marble top to dissipate this poesy!"

This natural cry, which found an echo among all the guests, piqued their curiosity, already so skilfully excited.

"Every morning, mounted on that fine Sultan which you had sent me from England," he said to Lord Dudley, "I rode alongside of her carriage, the horses of which went purposely at a walk, and I saw the order for the day written in the flowers of her bouquet in case we should not be able to exchange rapidly a phrase. Although we saw each other almost every evening in society, and although she wrote to me every day, we had adopted, to deceive the eyes of others and mislead their observations, a particular line of conduct. Not to look at each other, to avoid each other, to speak evil of each

other; to admire one's self and to praise one's self, or to pose as a disdained lover, all these old tricks are not so good, on either side, as proclaiming a false passion for an indifferent person and an air of indifference for the real idol. If two lovers wish to play this trick, the world will always be duped; but they must in that case be very sure of each other. Her puppet should be a man in favor, a man of the court, cold and devout, whom she never receives in her own house. This comedy is given for the benefit of the stupid and of the salons which laugh at it. There was no question of marriage between us; six years' difference in our ages would have prejudiced her; she knew nothing of my fortune, which, from principle, I had always concealed. As for myself, charmed with her wit, with her manners, with the extent of her attainments, with her knowledge of the world, I would have married her without reflection. Nevertheless, this reserve pleased me. If she had been the first to speak of marriage to me in a certain fashion, perhaps I should have found something common in this accomplished soul. Six months full and entire, a diamond of the first water! that is my share of love in this lower world. One morning, finding myself ill with that fever of lassitude and pain in the limbs with which a cold usually commences, I wrote a word to ask her to postpone one of those secret fêtes concealed under the roofs of Paris like pearls in the sea. As soon as the letter had been sent, I was seized with remorse:—'She will not believe me ill!' I thought.

She pretended to be jealous and suspicious. When jealousy is genuine," said De Marsay, interrupting himself, "it is the evident sign of an only love—"

"Why?" asked the Princesse de Cadignan quickly.

"An only and true love," replied De Marsay, "produces a sort of corporal apathy in harmony with the contemplation into which you fall. The mind then complicates everything, it exercises itself, creates fantasies, makes of them realities, torments; and this jealousy is as charming as it is vexing and disturbing."

A foreign minister smiled in recalling to himself, by the light of a memory, the truthfulness of this observation.

"'Moreover,' I said to myself; 'why should I lose a happiness?'" said De Marsay, resuming his narrative. "Would it not be better to go, even with the fever? Then, feeling myself ill, I believed her capable of hastening to me and of compromising herself. I made an effort, I wrote a second letter, I took it myself, for my confidential man was no longer with me. We were separated by the river, I had to cross Paris; but finally, at a convenient distance from her hôtel, I found a public messenger, I directed him to deliver the letter immediately, and I had the fine idea of passing in a hackney coach before her door, to see if by chance she did not receive the two letters at the same time. At the moment when I arrived, at two o'clock, the great doors opened to permit the entrance of the carriage

of whom?—of the puppet! It is fifteen years since then—well, in speaking to you, the orator drained dry, the minister dried up by the contact of public affairs, feels still a boiling in his heart and a heat in his diaphragm. At the end of an hour, I came back: the carriage was still in the courtyard! My message was doubtless reposing in the concierge's lodge. Finally, at half-past three, the carriage departed; I was able to study the physiognomy of my rival,—he was grave, he did not smile; but he loved, and doubtless it was a question of some affair. I went to the rendezvous, the queen of my heart came there, I found her calm, pure and serene. Here I should avow to you that I have always thought Othello not only stupid, but of very bad taste. A man half-negro alone is capable of conducting himself in such a manner. Shakespeare has very well felt this, moreover, when he entitled his piece *The Moor of Venice.* The aspect of the woman beloved had something so balsamic for the heart that it should dissipate pain, doubts, chagrins, —all my anger vanished, I found my smile again. Thus this countenance which, at my present age, would have been the most horrible dissimulation, was an effect of my youth and of my love. Once my jealousy was buried, I was able to observe. The effects of my illness were visible in me, the horrible doubts which had tortured me, had even augmented them. Finally, I found an opening in which to slip these words:

"'You had no one with you this morning?"

pretending to base my inquiry on the disquietude which I had experienced through the fear that she could not dispose of her morning after my first note.

"'Ah!' said she, 'it is necessary to be a man to have such ideas! I, to think of anything but your sufferings? Up to the moment when your second note arrived, I did nothing but seek for means to go to you.'

"'And you remained alone?'

"'Alone,' she said, looking at me with so perfect an attitude of innocence, that it must have been a similar one which impelled the Moor to kill Desdemona.

"As she was the only occupant of her hôtel, this word was a frightful falsehood. A single falsehood destroys that absolute confidence which, for certain souls, is the very foundation of love. In order to express to you that which took place in me at this moment, it would be necessary to admit that we have an interior being of which the visible *ourselves* is the scabbard, that this being, as brilliant as a light, is as delicate as a shadow.—Well, this beautiful *I* was then clothed forever in black. Yes, I felt a cold and fleshless hand drape me in the winding-sheet of experience, impose upon me that eternal mourning which a first betrayal gives to our soul. As I lowered my eyes so that she might not remark my confusion, this proud thought came to give me a little strength:—'If she deceive you, she is unworthy of you!' I attributed my sudden flushing and some

tears which came into my eyes to a sudden recurrence of pain, and the gentle creature insisted upon conducting me home, the shades of the carriage drawn down. During the ride, she was full of a solicitude and a tenderness which would have deceived that same Moor of Venice whom I have taken for a point of comparison. In fact, if that great child should hesitate two seconds longer, every intelligent spectator would feel that he was going to ask forgiveness of Desdemona. Therefore, to kill a woman is a childish act! She wept on leaving me, so unhappy was she at not being able to take care of me herself. She wished to be my valet de chambre, whose happiness was for her a subject of jealousy, and all that repeated, oh! as if it had been written by Clarissa happy. There is always a fine monkey in the prettiest and most angelic of women!"

At this word, all the women lowered their eyes as if wounded by this cruel truth so cruelly formulated.

"I say nothing to you of the night nor of the week which I passed," resumed De Marsay, "I recognized in myself a statesman."

This was so well said, that we all made an involuntary gesture of admiration.

"In going over in review with an infernal intelligence, the truly cruel vengeances which one could inflict on a woman," said De Marsay continuing—"and, as we loved each other, there were some terrible, some irreparable ones,—I despised myself, I felt myself vulgar, I formulated gradually a horrible code, that of indulgence. To avenge ourselves on

a woman, is not that to recognize that there is but one for us, that we should not know how to do without her? and therefore vengeance is a means of reconquering her? If she is not indispensable to us, if there are others, why not leave to her the right of changing which we arrogate to ourselves? This, be it understood, is only applicable to passion; otherwise, it would be against all society, and nothing proves better the necessity of an indissoluble marriage than the instability of passion. The two sexes should be chained up, like the wild beasts that they are, in laws fatal, deaf and silent. Suppress vengeance, and treason is no longer anything in love. Those who believe that there exists in the world only one woman for them, they should be for vengeance, and then there is but one, that of Othello. Here was mine."

This word caused among us all that imperceptible movement which the reporters thus describe in the Parliamentary debates:—*Profound sensation.*

"Cured of my cold and of love, pure, absolute and divine, I permitted myself to take up with an adventure the heroine of which was charming, and of a style of beauty entirely different from that of my deceiving angel. I was very careful not to break with this woman so clever and so good an actress, for I do not know if true love gives such graceful enjoyments as so sapient a deceit is prodigal of. Such an hypocrisy is the equivalent of virtue—I do not say that for you English, my lady," cried the minister softly, addressing Lady Barimore, the

daughter of Lord Dudley. "In short, I endeavored to be the same lover. I had to have some locks of my hair made up for my new angel, and I went to see a skilful artist who, at that time, lived in the Rue Boucher. This man had the monopoly of capillary presents and I give his address for the benefit of those who have not much hair,—he has it of all kinds and of all colors. After having my commission explained to him, he showed me his works. I saw then examples of patience which surpass those of the stories attributed to the fairies, and which are true of the convicts. He informed me of the caprices and of the styles which regulate the fashions in hair.

"'For the last year,' he said to me, 'there has been a craze for marking linen with hair; and, happily, I have beautiful collections of hair and excellent workwomen.'

"On hearing these words I was struck by a suspicion, I drew my handkerchief and said to him:

"'So this was made in your establishment, with false hair?'

"He looked at my handkerchief and said:

"'Oh! that lady was very hard to please, she wished to have the exact shade of her hair. My wife marked those handkerchiefs herself. You have there, monsieur, one of the very finest things that have been executed.'

"Before this last enlightenment, I would have believed in something, I would have given heed to a woman's word. I went out having faith in pleasure;

but, in the matter of love, I became as atheistical as a mathematician. Two months later, I was seated by the side of the ethereal woman, in her boudoir, on her divan; I was holding one of her hands, she had very beautiful ones, and we were mounting the Alps of sentiment, gathering the most beautiful flowers, pulling the leaves off the daisies —there is always a moment in which you pluck the petals of the daisies, even when you are in a salon and when you have no daisies. At the strongest moment of tenderness, and when you love each other the most, love is so conscious of its short duration that you experience an invincible need of asking: 'Do you love me? Will you love me forever?' I seized this elegiac moment, so warm, so flowery, so expansive, to make her utter her most beautiful falsehoods in the ravishing language of those spiritual exaggerations and of that Gascon poesy peculiar to love. Charlotte displayed all the fine flower of her deceitfulness,—she could not live without me, I was for her the only man there was in the world, she was afraid of wearying me because my presence took from her all her wit; near to me, her faculties became all love; she was, moreover, too tender not to have fears; she had been seeking for the last six months for some means of attaching me to her eternally, and God alone knew of this secret; in short, she made of me her divinity!—"

The women who were listening to De Marsay appeared to be offended in seeing themselves so well represented, for he accompanied these words by

little actions, by poses of the head and by pretty airs that completed the illusion.

"At the moment when I was about to believe in these adorable falsehoods, still holding her moist hand in mine, I said to her:

"'When are you going to marry the duke?'

"This thrust was so direct, my look met hers so exactly, and her hand was so softly resting in mine, that her shudder, light as it was, could not be entirely concealed; her eyes flinched under mine, a slight redness colored her cheeks.

"'The duke! What do you mean?' she replied, feigning profound astonishment.

"'I know everything,' I resumed; 'and, in my opinion, you should not delay: he is rich, he is a duke; but he is more than devout, he is religious! Thus I am certain that you have been faithful to me, thanks to his scruples. You could not believe how essential it is for you to compromise him before himself and God; otherwise, you will never conclude the matter.'

"'Is it a dream?' she said, making, fifteen years before La Malibran, that jesture with the hair on her forehead, for which La Malibran was celebrated.

"'Come, do not be childish, my angel,' I said to her, wishing to take her hands.

"But she crossed her hands on her waist with a little prudish and vexed air.

"'Marry him, I permit you,' I went on, replying to her gesture by the *you* of the salons. 'More than that, I advise you to do it.'

"'But,' said she, falling at my knees, 'there is some horrible misunderstanding; I love but you in the world; you may ask of me whatever proofs you like.'

"'Rise, my dear, and do me the honor to be frank.'

"'As with God.'

"'Do you doubt my love?'

"'No.'

"'My fidelity?'

"'No.'

"'Well, I have committed the greatest of crimes, I have doubted of your love and of your fidelity. Between two intoxications, I have occupied myself with looking tranquilly around me.'

"'Tranquilly!' cried she, sighing. 'That is quite enough. Hènri, you no longer love me.'

"She had already found, as you see, a door by which to escape. In this sort of scene, an adverb is very dangerous. But, fortunately, curiosity caused her to add:

"'And what have you seen? Have I ever spoken to the duke otherwise than in society? Have you surprised in my eyes—?'

"'No,' I said, 'but in his. And you have made me go eight times to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin to see you both listening to the same mass.'

"'Ah!' she cried finally, 'I have then made you jealous!'

"'Oh! I am quite willing to be,' I said, admiring the suppleness of this quick intelligence and these feats of an acrobat which succeed only before the

blind. 'But by dint of going to church, I have become very incredulous. The day of my first cold and of your first deceit, when you believed me in bed, you received the duke, and you told me that you had seen no one.'

"'Do you know that your conduct is infamous?'

"'In what? I find your marriage with the duke to be an excellent affair: he gives you a fine name, the only position which is worthy of you, a situation brilliant, honorable. You will be one of the queens of Paris. I should be wronging you if I put any obstacle in the way of this arrangement, of this honorable life, of this superb alliance. Ah! some day, Charlotte, you will render me justice in discovering how different is my character from that of other young men. You were almost compelled to deceive me. Yes, you would have been very much embarrassed to have broken with me, for he spies you. It is time for us to separate, the duke is severely virtuous. It is necessary that you should become prudish, I advise it. The duke is vain, he will be proud of his wife.'

"'Ah!' she said to me, melting into tears, 'Henri, if you had spoken! yes, if you had wished it—I was in the wrong, do you understand!—We would have gone to live all our life in a corner, married, happy, in the face of the world.'

"'But now it is too late,' I replied, kissing her hands and assuming somewhat the air of a victim.

"'Mon Dieu! but I can undo everything,' she replied.

"'No, you have gone too far with the duke. I must even take a journey myself, so that we may the more easily separate. We should both have had to fear our own love.'

"'Do you think, Henri, that the duke has any suspicions?'

"I was still *Henri*, but I had lost forever the *thou*.

"'I do not think so,' I replied, assuming the manners and the tone of a *friend;* 'but become really devout, reconcile yourself with God, for the duke is waiting for proofs, he hesitates, and it is necessary to make him decide.'

"She rose, made the tour of her boudoir twice, in an agitation veritable or feigned; then she doubtless found an attitude and a look in harmony with this new situation, for she stopped before me, offered me her hand and said to me in a voice that betrayed emotion:

"'Ah well! Henri, you are a loyal, a noble and a charming man; I shall never forget you.'

"This was an admirable strategy. She was ravishing in this transition, necessary to the situation in which she wished to place herself with regard to me. I assumed the attitude, the manners and the look of a man so profoundly afflicted that I saw her too-recent dignity soften; she looked at me, she took me by the hand, drew me, threw me almost, but gently, on the divan, and said to me after a moment of silence:

"'I am profoundly sad, my child. Do you love me?'

"'Oh! yes.'

"'Well, what will you become?'"

Here all the women looked at each other.

"'If I suffered in recalling her betrayal, I laughed at the air of intimate conviction and of gentle interior satisfaction with which she contemplated, if not my death, at least an eternal melancholy," resumed De Marsay. "Oh! do not laugh yet," he said to the guests, "there is something better." I looked at her very lovingly after a pause, and said to her:

"'Yes, that is what I have asked myself.'

"'Well, what will you do?'

"'I asked it of myself the day after my cold.'

"'And—?' she said, with a visible anxiety.

"'And I put myself in a way to be near that little lady to whom I am reputed to be paying court.'

"Charlotte rose suddenly from the divan like a startled doe, trembled like a leaf, threw upon me one of those looks in which the women forget all their dignity, all their modesty, their cleverness, their gracefulness even, the sparkling look of a viper pursued, forced into its corner, and said to me:

"'And I who loved him! I who struggled! I who—'

"She made at this third idea, which I leave you to guess, the very finest musical close that I have ever heard.

"'Mon Dieu!' she cried, 'are we not unhappy! we can never be loved. There is never anything

serious for you in the purest sentiments. But, see now, even when you play tricks you are still our dupes.'

"'I see it very well,' I said with a contrite air. 'You have too much wit in your anger, for your heart to be really suffering.'

"This modest epigram redoubled her fury, she found tears of vexation.

"'You dishonor for me, the world and life,' she said, 'you take away from me all my illusions, you deprave my heart.'

"She said to me everything that I had a right to say to her, with a simplicity of effrontery, with a naïve temerity which certainly would have nailed to his place any other man.

"'What are we going to be, poor women, in the society which the Charter of Louis XVIII. makes for us?'

"You may judge to what a point she had carried her phraseology!

"'Yes, we are born to suffer. In all that concerns passion, we are always above and you are always beneath, loyalty. You have nothing honest in your hearts. For you, love is a play in which you always cheat.'

"'Dear,' I said to her, 'to take anything serious in society as it is, that would be to play the languishing lover to an actress.'

"'What infamous treason! It has been reasoned out—'

"'No, reasonable.'

"'Adieu, Monsieur de Marsay,' she said, 'you have horribly deceived me— '

"'Madame la Duchesse,' I replied, assuming a submissive attitude, 'will she then remember the wrongs of Charlotte?'

"'Certainly,' she said with a bitter tone.

"'Therefore you detest me?'

"She made a movement with her head, and I said to myself, 'there is some resource!' I departed with a sentiment which allowed her to believe that she had something to avenge. Well, my friends, I have closely studied the lives of men who have had success with women, but I do not believe that either the Maréchal de Richelieu, or Lauzun, or Louis de Valois, had ever made, for the first time, so brilliant a retreat. As to my mind and my heart, they were formed then once for all, and the empire which I then was able to acquire over the unreflecting movements which make us commit so many stupidities has given me this fine composure which you know."

"How sorry I am for the second lady!" said the Baronne de Nucingen.

An imperceptible smile which moved the pale lips of De Marsay, made Delphine de Nucingen blush.

"*How von vorgets!*" cried the Baron de Nucingen.

The naïveté of the celebrated banker had such a success, that his wife, who had been this second of De Marsay, could not refrain from laughing with everybody else.

"You are all disposed to condemn this woman," said Lady Dudley, "well, I can understand how she

did not consider her marriage as an inconstancy! The men never wish to make any distinction between constancy and fidelity. I know the woman of whom Monsieur De Marsay has related to us the history, and she is one of your very great ladies!"

"Alas! milady, you are right," replied De Marsay. "For nearly the last fifty years we have been assisting at the continuous ruin of all social distinctions, we should have saved women from this great shipwreck, but the Civil Code has passed over their heads the level of its Articles. However terrible may be these words, let us say them,—the duchesses are departing and the marquises also! As to the baronesses, I ask pardon of Madame de Nucingen, who will be made a countess when her husband becomes a peer of France, but the baronesses have never been able to have themselves taken seriously."

"The aristocracy commences with the viscountess," said Blondet, smiling.

"The countesses will remain," resumed De Marsay. "An elegant woman will be more or less countess, countess of the Empire or of yesterday, countess of the old stock, or, as the Italians say, countess by politeness. But, as to the great lady, she is dead with the grandiose surroundings of the last century, with the powder, the patches, the high-heeled slippers, the busk corsets ornamented with knots of ribbons. The duchesses of to-day pass through the doors without there being any necessity for enlarging them for their paniers. Finally, the Empire saw the last of the dresses with

long trains! I have yet to comprehend how the sovereign who wished to have his court swept by the satin or the velvet of the ducal robes did not establish for certain families the right of primogeniture by indestructible laws. Napoléon did not foresee the effects of that Code of which he was so proud. This man, in creating his duchesses, produced our women *comme il faut* of to-day, the mediate product of his legislation."

"Ideas, taken like a hammer by the youth who comes out of college and by the obscure journalist, have demolished the magnificences of the social state," said the Comte de Vandenesse. "To-day, any rogue who can conveniently sustain his head in a collar, cover his powerful man's chest with a half-yard of satin in the form of a cuirass, show a forehead on which gleams an apocryphal genius under curled locks, balance himself on two varnished pumps ornamented with silk stockings which cost six francs, maintain his eyeglass under one of his arched eyebrows by wrinkling the upper part of his cheek, and, whether he be lawyer's clerk, son of a contractor, or bastard of a banker, survey impertinently the prettiest duchess, make a valuation of her as she descends the stairway of a theatre, and say to his friend clothed by Buisson, where we all get our clothes, and mounted on varnish like the first duke that comes:—'There, my dear fellow, is a woman *comme il faut.*'"

"You have not known how," said Lord Dudley, "to become a party, you will not have any politics

from now for a long time. In France, you talk a great deal of organizing labor, and you have not yet organized property. This is then what will happen to you: some duke or other—there were still to be met with under Louis XVIII., or under Charles X., some who possessed an income of two hundred thousand francs, a magnificent hotel, a sumptuous household,—this duke could conduct himself like a grand seigneur. The last of these French grand seigneurs was the Prince de Talleyrand. This duke left four children, two of whom were daughters. By supposing great good-fortune in the manner in which he married them all, each of his heirs has no more than sixty or eighty thousand francs income to-day; each of them is the father or the mother of several children, is consequently obliged to live in an apartment, on the ground floor or on the first story of a house, with the greatest economy; who knows even if they do not have to seek for a fortune? Thus it follows, that the daughter of the eldest son, who is only duchess in name, has neither her carriage, nor her servants, nor her opera-box, nor her time to herself; she has neither her apartment in her hotel, nor her fortune, nor her gewgaws; she is buried in the marriage state as a woman of the Rue Saint-Denis is in her shopkeeping; she buys the stockings of her dear little children, nurses them and watches over her daughters whom she no longer puts in the convent. Your most noble women have thus become excellent sitting hens."

"Alas! yes," said Joseph Bridau. "Our epoch

has no longer those beautiful feminine flowers which ornamented the great centuries of the French monarchy. The fan of the *grande dame* is broken. The woman has no longer need to blush, to deceive, to whisper, to hide herself, to show herself. The fan serves no longer but to fan her. When an article is no more than that is, it is too useful to be an object of luxury."

"Everything in France has been the accomplice of the woman *comme il faut*," said Daniel d'Arthez. "The aristocracy has given its consent by retreating to the depths of its estates, where it has gone to hide itself to die, emigrating into the interior before ideas, as it did formerly into foreign countries before the masses of the populace. The women who could have established European salons, moulded public opinion, turned it inside out like a glove, dominated the world by dominating the men illustrious in art or in thought who should have dominated it, have committed the fault of abandoning the field, ashamed at having to contest it with a bourgeoisie intoxicated with power and which enters upon the great scene of the world to be perhaps cut into morsels by the barbarians who are close at its heels. Thus, where the bourgeois expect to see princesses, they perceive nothing but young women *comme il faut*. To-day, the princes no longer find great ladies to compromise, they can no longer even make illustrious some woman taken at hazard. The Duc de Bourbon is the last prince who has availed himself of this privilege."

"And God alone knows what it costs him!" said Lord Dudley.

"To-day, the princes have women *comme il faut*, who are obliged to share their theatre-boxes with their female friends, and from whom the royal favor will not make an illustrious line of descendants, who flow without any brilliancy between the waters of the bourgeoisie and those of the nobility, neither altogether noble nor altogether bourgeois," said the Marquise de Rochefide, bitterly.

"The press has inherited from the woman," cried Rastignac. "She no longer has the merit of the spoken *feuilletons*, of delicious misstatements ornamented with beautiful language. We read the feuilletons written in a patois which changes every three years, the little journals jocose as undertaker's assistants and light as the lead of their official functions. French conversation is now conducted in a revolutionary Iroquois, from one end of the country to another, by long columns of matter struck off in establishments where a press grinds, instead of the elegant circles which formerly shone there."

"The knell of your high society is sounding, do you hear it?" said a Russian prince, "and the first stroke is your modern word, *a woman comme il faut!*"

"You are right, prince," said De Marsay. "This woman, issued from the ranks of the nobility, or pushed up from the bourgeoisie, come from any place, even from the provinces, is the expression of the present times, a last presentation of good taste, of wit, of grace, of distinction combined, but lessened.

We shall see no more *grandes dames* in France, but there will be for a long time the women *comme il faut*, elected by public opinion to an upper feminine Chamber, and which will be for the fair sex that which the *gentleman* is in England."

"And they call that progress!" said Mademoiselle des Touches; "I should like to know where the progress is."

"Ah! it is in this," said Madame de Nucingen. "Formerly, a woman might have the voice of a fish-wife, the walk of a grenadier, the bold forehead of a courtesan, her hair pulled to the back of her head, a big foot, a thick hand, she was nevertheless a *grande dame;* but, to-day, were she a Montmorency, if the demoiselles De Montmorency could ever be like this, she would not be a woman *comme il faut.*"

"But what do you mean by a woman *comme il faut?*" asked Count Adam Laginski, ingenuously.

"She is a modern creation, a deplorable triumph of the elective system applied to the fair sex," said the minister. "Every revolution has its catch-word, a word in which it is summed up and which describes it."

"You are right," said the Russian prince, who had come to establish for himself a literary reputation in Paris. "To explain certain words which are added, from century to century, to your noble language, that would be to construct a magnificent history. *To organize*, for example, is a word of the Empire, and which contains all of Napoléon."

"All that does not tell me what a woman *comme il faut* is," cried the young Pole.

"Well, I will explain it to you," replied Émile Blondet to Count Adam. "On a certain fine day you are idling through Paris. It is after two o'clock, but not yet five. You see coming toward you a woman; the first sight of her is like the preface to a beautiful book, it gives you a presentiment of a world of elegant and delicate things. Like the botanist traversing the hills and dales of his herborizing, among all the Parisian vulgarities you have finally found a rare flower. Either this woman is accompanied by two men of a very distinguished appearance, one of whom at least is decorated, or some servant in undress livery follows ten steps behind her. She does not wear glaring colors, nor open-work stockings, nor a too-elaborate buckle on her girdle, nor embroidered pantalettes flapping around her ankles. You notice on her feet either shoes of prunella with lacings crossed on a cotton stocking of an excessive fineness or on a silk stocking all of one gray color, or laced boots of the most exquisite simplicity. You notice her dress because of its sufficiently handsome material, of a moderate price, and the style of which surprises more than one bourgeoise; it is nearly always a redingote fastened by knots, and delicately finished with an edging or an imperceptible thread. The unknown has a manner of her own of wrapping herself in a shawl or in a mantle; she knows how to arrange it from the lower part of her body to her neck, making of it a

sort of shell which would transform a bourgeoise into a tortoise, but underneath which she indicates to you the most beautiful forms, while completely veiling them. By what means? This secret she keeps to herself, without being protected in it by any letters-patent. In her walk she gives herself a certain concentric and harmonious movement which makes oscillate under the draperies her graceful or dangerous form, as the adder at mid-day under the green gauze of its trembling verdure. Were she an angel or a devil, this graceful undulation which plays under the long cape of black silk and agitates the lace on its edges, diffuses an aërial balm, and one which I would willingly designate as the breeze of the Parisienne? You will recognize on the arms, at the waist, around the neck, a science of folds which drapes the most obstinate material in a manner which recalls to you the antique Mnemosyne. Ah! how well she understands, if you will permit me the expression, *the cadence of the walk*. Study carefully this manner of advancing the foot, modeling the dress around the limb with such a decent precision as to excite in the passer-by an admiration mingled with desire, but restrained by a profound respect. When an Englishwoman undertakes this step, she has the air of a grenadier who is marching to storm a redoubt. It is the woman of Paris who has the genius for carriage! Thus the municipality owes to her the asphalt of the sidewalks. This unknown brushes against no one. In order to pass, she waits with a proud modesty till

room is made for her. The distinction peculiar to the well-bred woman betrays itself, above all, by the manner in which she holds the shawl or the mantilla crossed upon her breast. She has to you, as she walks, a little air, dignified and serene, like the Madonnas of Raphael in their frames. Her attitude, at once tranquil and disdainful, obliges the most insolent dandy to make way for her. Her hat, of a remarkable simplicity, has fresh ribbons. Perhaps there may be flowers on it, but the most skilful of these women wear nothing but bows. Feathers require a carriage, flowers attract too much attention. Underneath you see the fresh and reposeful countenance of a woman sure of herself without fatuity, who looks at nothing and sees everything, whose vanity, cloyed by a constant satisfaction, diffuses over her visage an indifference which piques the curiosity. She knows that she is watched, she knows that nearly everyone, even the women, turn around to look at her. Thus she traverses Paris like a floating gossamer thread, white and pure. This beautiful creature frequents the most equatorial latitudes, the fittest longitudes in Paris; you will find her between the tenth and the hundred-and-tenth arcade of the Rue de Rivoli; along the line of the boulevards, from the equator of the Panoramas, where the productions of India flourish, where the most fervent creations of industry display themselves, as far as the cape of the Madeleine; in the countries the least dirtied by the bourgeoisie, between the thirtieth and the one hundred-

and-fiftieth numbers of the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. During the winter, she entertains herself on the Terrasse des Feuillants, and not in the least on the bitumen promenade that extends in front of it. According to the season, she flits in the alley of the Champs-Élysées, bounded on the east by the Place Louis XV., on the west by the Avenue de Marigny, on the south by the *Chaussée*, on the north by the gardens of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Never will you encounter this pretty species of woman in the hyperborean regions of the Rue Saint-Denis, never in the Kamtchatkas of the muddy streets, little ones or commercial ones; never anywhere in bad weather. These Parisian flowers open in Oriental airs, perfume the promenades, and, after five o'clock, close up like yellow day-lilies. The women whom you will see later having something of their appearance, endeavoring to imitate them, are the women *comme il en faut;* whilst the beautiful unknown, your Beatrice of the day, is the woman *comme il faut.* It is not easy for foreigners, my dear count, to recognize the distinctions by which the observers *emeritus* distinguish them, women are such actresses, but they blaze in the eyes of the Parisians,—they are the hooks badly concealed, the lacings which show their network of a rusty white in the back of the dress through a yawning opening, frayed shoes, hat ribbons that have been ironed over, a dress that swells out too much, a style too *gommée.* You will notice a kind of effort in the premeditated lowering of the eyes.

There is something conventional in the attitude. As to the bourgeoise, it is impossible to confound her with the woman *comme il faut;* she serves admirably to set her off, she explains the charm which your unknown has thrown over you. The bourgeoise is a woman of business, goes out in all sorts of weather, trots about, comes, goes, looks about her, does not know whether she will enter or whether she will not enter a shop. Where the woman *comme il faut* knows very well what she desires and what she is doing, the bourgeoise is undecided, picks up her dress to step over a gutter, drags after her a child who obliges her to look out for the vehicles; she is maternal in public, and talks with her daughter; she has money in her cabas and open-work stockings on her feet; in winter, she wears a boa over a fur pelerine, in summer, a shawl and a scarf; the bourgeoise has an admirable understanding of the redundancies of the toilet. Your beautiful pedestrian you will find again at the Italiens, at the Opéra, at a ball. She then displays herself under an aspect so different that you would say that there were two creatures without any resemblance. The woman has issued from her mysterious garments like the butterfly from its silky cocoon. She serves up, like a delicacy, to your ravished eyes, those forms which in the morning her corsage barely defined. At the theatre, she does not go beyond the second boxes, excepting at the Italiens. You can then study at your ease the discerning slowness of her movements. The charming deceiver makes use of the little

politic feminine artifices with a naturalness which excludes all thought of art and of premeditation. If she has a royally beautiful hand, the most sceptical will believe that it is absolutely necessary for her to roll up, to put back or to separate those of her *ringlets* or of her curls which she is caressing. If she has something splendid in her profile, it will seem to you that she gives an irony or a grace to that which she is saying to her neighbor by her manner of holding her head so as to show that magic effect of the profile turned away which is such a favorite with the great painters, which catches the light on the cheek, defines the nose by a clean line, illuminates the pink of the nostrils, cuts the forehead by a sharp accent, leaves to the glance its sparkle of fire, but directed into space, and picks out with a point of light the white roundness of the chin. If she has a pretty foot, she throws herself upon a divan with all the coquettishness of a cat in the sunshine, her feet advanced, without your being able to discover in her attitude anything but the most delicious model furnished by lassitude to the statuary. There is nothing like the woman *comme il faut* for being at her ease in her toilet; nothing embarrasses her. You will never surprise her, like a bourgeoise, bringing up a recalcitrant shoulder strap, pulling down an insubordinate busk, looking to see if the neck piece is fulfilling its office of faithless guardian of two treasures of dazzling whiteness, casting sly glances at herself in the mirrors to make sure that her coiffure is keeping in its place. Her

toilet is always in harmony with her character; she has had time in which to study herself, to decide what is becoming to her, for she has known for a long time what does not become her. You will not see her when the house empties, she has disappeared before the end of the play. If by chance she should show herself, calm and noble, on the red steps of the stairway, she is then a prey to violent feelings. She is there by command, she has some furtive glance to give, some promise to receive. Perhaps she descends thus slowly to satisfy the vanity of a slave whom she sometimes obeys. If your encounter has taken place at a ball or a soirée, you will gather the honey, natural or affected, of her wily voice; you will be charmed with her speech, empty, but to which she knows how to communicate the value of thoughts by an inimitable management."

"To be a woman *comme il faut*, is it not necessary to have wit?" asked the Polish count.

"It is impossible to be one without having a great deal of taste," replied Madame d'Espard.

"And, in France, to have taste, is to have more than wit," said the Russian.

"The wit of this woman is the triumph of an art altogether plastic," resumed Blondet. "You will not know what she has said, but you will be charmed. She will have shaken her head, or slightly lifted her white shoulders, she will have gilded an insignificant phrase by a charming little pouting smile, or will have put an epigram by Voltaire into a *hein?* in an *ah!* in an *and then!* An

attitude of her head will be the liveliest interrogation; she will give significance to the movement by which she makes dance a perfume flask attached to her finger by a ring. It is a case of artificial grandeurs attained by superlative littlenesses: she has dropped her hand with a noble movement by hanging it over the arm of a seat like the drops of dew on the margin of a flower, and everything is said, —she has delivered a judgment from which there is no appeal and which may move the most pitiless. She has known how to listen to you, she has procured you the opportunity to be sprightly and witty, and, I appeal to your modesty if it is not so, those moments are rare."

The candid air of the young Pole to whom Blondet addressed himself caused an explosion of laughter among the guests.

"You will not talk a half-hour with a bourgeoise without her bringing in her husband in some form or other," resumed Blondet, who had lost none of his gravity; "but if you should know that your woman *comme il faut* is married, she has had the delicacy to so well conceal her husband that it will require of you an expedition like Christopher Columbus's to discover him. Often, you will not succeed alone. If you have not been able to question anyone, at the close of the evening you may surprise her looking attentively at a middle-aged man and decorated, who lowers his head and goes out. She has ordered her carriage, and departs. You are not the rose, but you have been near it, and you go

to sleep under the golden canopies of a delicious dream which will continue perhaps when slumber shall, with its heavy finger, have opened the ivory portals of the temple of fantasies. In her own house, no woman *comme il faut* is visible before four o'clock, when she receives. She is wise enough to make you always wait. You will find everything in good taste in her household, her luxury is always in evidence, yet never oppressing; you will see nothing under a glass case, nor with the remnants of any wrappings attached, as in a larder. You will be sufficiently warm on her stairway. Everywhere your eyes will be attracted by flowers, the only gifts which she accepts, and from a few persons only: the bouquets live but a day, give pleasure and have to be renewed; for her, they are, as in the Orient, a symbol, a promise. The costly trifles in fashion are displayed, but without suggesting either the museum or the curiosity-shop. You will discover her at the corner of her fire, on her sofa, from which she will greet you without rising. Her conversation will no longer be that of the ball. Elsewhere, she was our creditor; in her own house, her intelligence is your debtor for pleasure. These shades, the woman *comme il faut* possesses to a marvelous degree. She desires in you a man who will extend her society, the object of the cares and of the anxieties which the women *comme il faut* give themselves to-day. Therefore, to attach you to her salon, she will display a ravishing coquetry. You will there be conscious, above all, how much the

women are isolated to-day, why they wish to have a little world in which they will figure as constellations. Conversation is impossible without generalities."

"Yes," said De Marsay, "you have very well indicated the defect of our epoch. The epigram, that volume in one word, no longer falls, as it did in the eighteenth century, either upon persons or upon things, but upon paltry events, and perishes with the day."

"Thus the wit of the woman *comme il faut*, when she has it," resumed Blondet, "consists in putting everything in doubt, as that of the bourgeoise serves her to assert everything. There is the great difference between these two women; the bourgeoise is certainly virtuous, the woman *comme il faut* does not know if she still is, or if she will be always; she hesitates and resists where the other refuses flatly to fall completely. This hesitation in all things is one of the last graces which our horrible epoch leaves to her. She goes but seldom to church, but she will talk of religion and will wish to convert you if you have the good taste to assume the attitude of a free-thinker, for you will then have opened an issue for the stereotyped phrases, for the poses of the head and for the gestures conventional among all women, —'Ah! fie fie! I thought you too intelligent to attack religion! Society is crumbling and you take away its mainstay. But religion, at this moment, it is you and I, it is property, it is the future of our children. Ah! let us not be egotistic. Individuality

is the malady of the times, and religion is for it the sole remedy, it unites the families which your laws disunite,' etc. Then she opens a discourse neo-Christian sprinkled with political ideas, which is neither Catholic nor Protestant, but moral, oh! devilishly moral, in which you recognize a piece of each stuff which the warring modern doctrines have spun."

The ladies could not restrain their laughter at the little airs and graces with which Émile illustrated his mockings.

"This discourse, dear Count Adam," said Blondet, looking at the Pole, "will demonstrate to you that the woman *comme il faut* represents not less the intellectual muddle than the political muddle, just as she is surrounded by the showy and unsubstantial productions of an industry which is ceaselessly occupied with the destruction of its works in order that it may replace them. You take your departure from her house saying to yourself:—'She certainly has a superior order of ideas!' You will believe this all the more because she will have sounded your heart and your intelligence with a delicate hand, she will have asked for your secrets; for the woman *comme il faut* appears to be ignorant of everything in order that she may learn everything; there are certain things which she never knows, even when she does know them. Only, you will be disquieted, you will be ignorant of the state of her heart. Formerly, the *grandes dames* loved with public proclamations, newspaper in hand and

announcements; to-day, the woman *comme il faut* has her little passion ruled like a sheet of music, with its quavers, its crotchets, its minims, its rests, its pauses, its sharps on the key. A feeble woman, she does not wish to compromise either her love, her husband, or the future of her children. To-day, name, position, and fortune, are no longer flags sufficiently respected to cover all the merchandise that is on board. The entire aristocracy no longer comes forward to serve as a screen to a woman detected in her fault. The woman *comme il faut* has not then, like the *grande dame* of former times, an aspect of high combat, she cannot crush anything under her feet, it is she who would be crushed. Thus she is the woman of the jesuitical *mezzo termine*, of the most equivocal temperaments, of the regulated conventionalities, of the anonymous passions conducted between two shores with steep banks. She is suspicious of her servants like an Englishwoman, who has always in prospect a legal process for criminal conversation. This woman, so at-liberty at the ball, so pretty on the promenade, is a slave at home; she has no independence excepting behind closed doors, or in her thoughts. She wishes to remain a woman *comme il faut*. This is her theme. Now, to-day, the wife who has been left by her husband, reduced to a meagre allowance, without a carriage, or luxury, or a box at the Opéra, without the divine accessories of the toilet, is no longer either wife, or maid, or bourgeoise; she is dissolved, and becomes a thing. The Carmelite nuns will not receive a married

woman, it might be a question of bigamy; will her lover always be willing to risk it? there is the question. The woman *comme il faut* may give rise perhaps to calumny, never to gossip."

"All that is horribly true," said the Princesse de Cadignan.

"Thus," resumed Blondet, "the woman *comme il faut* lives midway between the English hypocrisy and the graceful freedom of the eighteenth century; a bastard system which reveals to us a period in which nothing that comes on resembles that which goes away, in which the transitions lead to nothing, in which there are only shadings of things, in which the great figures disappear, in which the distinctions are purely personal. In my opinion, it is impossible that any woman, even though she were born in the neighborhood of the throne, should acquire before the age of twenty-five the encyclopedic science of nothings, the intimate knowledge of households, the great little things, the music of voices and the harmonies of colors, the angelic diableries and the innocent knaveries, the language and the muteness, the seriousness and the jests, the wit and the stupidity, the diplomacy and the ignorance, which constitute the woman *comme il faut.*"

"According to the programme which you have just indicated to us," said Mademoiselle des Touches to Émile Blondet, "how would you classify the woman author? Is she a woman *comme il faut?*"

"When she has not genius, she is a woman *comme*

il n'en faut pas,—who is not necessary," replied Émile Blondet, accompanying his answer with a subtle look which might pass for an eulogium addressed frankly to Camille Maupin. "This opinion did not originate with me, but with Napoléon," he added.

"Oh! do not pick a quarrel with Napoléon," said Canalis with an involuntary gesture of emphasis, "that was one of his weaknesses, to be jealous of literary genius, for he had his weaknesses. Who will ever be able to explain, to paint or to comprehend Napoléon? A man who is represented with his arms folded, and who has done everything! who has been the very finest power known, the power the most concentrated, the most biting, the most acid of all powers; a singular genius who marched armed civilization over all the world without fixing it anywhere; a man who could accomplish everything, because he willed everything; a prodigious phenomenon of will, suppressing a malady by a battle, and who, however, was obliged to die of a malady, in his bed, after having lived in the midst of balls and bullets; a man who carried in his head a code and a sword, the word and the action; a perspicacious spirit which foresaw everything, excepting his own fall; a grotesque politician who tricked men by handfuls at a time, for the sake of economy, and who respected three heads,—those of Talleyrand, of Pozzo di Borgo and of Metternich, diplomatists whose deaths might have saved the French Empire, and who appeared to weigh more with him

than thousands of soldiers; a man to whom, by a rare privilege, nature had left a heart in his body of bronze; a man laughing and good-natured at midnight with women, and who, in the morning, was managing Europe like a young girl who amuses herself by splashing the water of her bath! Hypocritical and generous, loving the spangled and the simple, without taste and yet protecting the arts; notwithstanding these antitheses, great in everything by instinct or by organization; Cæsar at twenty-five, Cromwell at thirty; then, like a grocer of the Père-Lachaise, a good father and a good husband. In short, he improvised monuments, empires, kings, codes, verses, a romance, and the whole with more of ability than of exactness. Did he not wish to make of Europe, France? And, after having made us so weigh upon the earth as to change the laws of gravitation, he left us poorer than on the day on which he laid his hand upon us. And he, who had taken an empire with his name, lost his name on the border of his empire, in a sea of blood and of soldiers. A man who, all thought and all action, included Desaix and Fouché!"

"Positively and in all justice, the true king!" said De Marsay.

"Ah! what a *blayzure tu tigest leestening tu you*," said the Baron de Nucingen.

"But do you think that that which we serve up to you is common?" said Joseph Bridau. "If it were necessary to pay for the pleasures of conversation as you pay for those of the dance or of music, your

fortune would not be sufficient! The same flow of wit is not given twice, as at the theatres."

"Have we really fallen away as much as these messieurs think?" said the Princesse de Cadignan, looking at the other ladies with a smile at once doubting and mocking. "Because, to-day, under a régime which shrinks everything, you like little dishes, little apartments, little pictures, little articles, little newspapers, little books, does it follow that the women are also less great? Why should the human heart change because you change your garments? In all epochs, the passions will be the same. I know of admirable devotions, of sublime sufferings, which have not had the publicity, the glory, if you wish, which in former times illustrated the errors of some women. But, though you may not have saved a king of France, you may, none the less, be Agnès Sorel. Do you think that our dear Marquise d'Espard is not as worthy as Madame Doublet, or Madame du Deffant, in whose house so much evil was said and done? Is not Taglioni worth Camargo? Is not Malibran the equal of Saint-Huberti? Are not our poets superior to those of the eighteenth century? If, at the present moment, through the fault of the grocers who govern, we have no particular style ourselves, did not the Empire have its distinction, like the century of Louis XV., and was not its splendor something fabulous? Have the sciences lost anything?"

"I am of your opinion, madame, the women of this epoch are truly great," replied General de

Montriveau. "When we shall have gone down to posterity, will not Madame Récamier assume proportions as great as those of the most beautiful women of former times? We have made so much history that the historians will be lacking! The century of Louis XIV. had only Madame de Sévigné, we have to-day in Paris a thousand like her, who certainly write better than she did, and who do not publish their letters. Whether the French woman be called *femme comme il faut* or *grande dame*, she will always be the woman *par excellence*. Émile Blondet has painted for us the accomplishments of a woman of to-day; but, at need, this woman who affects, who displays, who prattles the ideas of such and such messieurs, would be heroic! And, let us say it, your faults, mesdames, are so much the more poetic that they will be always and in all times environed by the greatest perils. I have seen a great deal of the world, I have perhaps begun my observations too late; but in those circumstances in which the unlawfulness of your sentiments might be excused, I have always observed the effects of an unknown chance, which you might call Providence, fatally overwhelming those whom we designate as light women."

"I hope," said Madame de Vandenesse, "that we can be great in some other way—"

"Oh! let the Marquis de Montriveau preach to us," cried Madame d'Espard.

"All the more so that he has preached a great deal from examples," said the Baronne de Nucingen.

"*Ma foi!*" resumed the general, "among all the dramas, for you make great use of that word," he said, looking at Blondet, "in which the finger of God has shown itself, the most frightful of those which I have seen was almost my own work—"

"Well, tell it to us!" cried Lady Barimore. "I love so much to shudder."

"That is a virtuous woman's taste," replied De Marsay, looking at Lord Dudley's charming daughter.

"During the campaign of 1812," said General de Montriveau, "I was the involuntary cause of a frightful misfortune which may serve you, Doctor Bianchon," said he, looking at me, "you who occupy yourself so much with the human spirit while occupying yourself with the body, to help solve some of your problems of the will. I was making my second campaign, I was enamored of perils and I laughed at everything, like the young and simple lieutenant of artillery that I was! When we arrived at the Bérésina, the army had no longer, as you know, any discipline, and no longer knew any military obedience. It was a rabble of men of all nations, who traveled instinctively from the north toward the south. The soldiers chased from their camp-fires a general in rags and barefooted when he brought them neither wood nor food. After the passage of that celebrated river, the disorder was in no wise lessened. I issued tranquilly, all alone, without food, from the marshes of Zembin, and I went in search of a house in which I might be

received. Not finding any, or driven from those which I found, I fortunately perceived, toward evening, a poor little Polish farm, of which nothing could give you an idea, unless you have seen the wooden houses of lower Normandy or the very poorest farms of La Beauce. These habitations consist of a single chamber divided at one end by a partition of planks, and the smaller apartment serves as a magazine of fodder. The obscurity of the twilight permitted me to see from a distance a light smoke arising from this house. Hoping to find there some comrades more obliging than those to whom I had addressed myself up to this time, I walked courageously toward the farmhouse. On entering, I found the table laid. Several officers, among them being a woman, a spectacle sufficiently common, were eating potatoes, horse-flesh broiled on the coals and frozen beet-roots. I recognized among the guests two or three captains of artillery in the regiment in which I had first served. I was welcomed with a hurrah of acclamations which would have greatly astonished me on the other side of the Bérésina; but, at this moment, the cold was less intense, my comrades were resting, they were warm, they were eating, and the room, strewn with bundles of straw, offered them the prospect of a delightful night. We did not then ask for so much at once. My comrades could be philanthropists gratuitously, one of the most common methods of being a philanthropist. I commenced eating, seating myself on one of the bundles of forage. At the end of the table, at

the side of the door which opened into the little apartment full of straw and hay, was placed my former colonel, one of the most extraordinary men that I have ever met in all the great rabble of men that I have been permitted to see. He was an Italian. Now, whenever human nature is beautiful in the southern countries, it is sublime. I do not know if you have ever remarked the singular whiteness of the Italians when they are white—it is magnificent, especially in the light. When I read the fantastic portrait which Charles Nodier has traced of Colonel Oudet, I found again all my own sensations in each of his elegant phrases. An Italian, like the greater number of the officers of his regiment, which had been borrowed, for that matter, by the Emperor from the army of Eugène, my colonel was a man of great stature; he was at least eight or nine inches taller than is usual, admirably proportioned, perhaps a little stout, but of a prodigious vigor, and nimble, active as a greyhound. His black hair, very curly, set off his complexion, as fair as a woman's; he had small hands, a handsome foot, a gracious mouth, an aquiline nose, the lines of which were delicate and the end of which contracted naturally and grew white when he was angry, which frequently happened. His irascibility so exceeded all belief that I will say nothing to you about it; you will be able to judge of it for yourselves. Near him, no one was able to remain calm. I alone, perhaps, did not fear him; he had conceived for me, it is true, such a singular friendship that he found

commendable everything that I did. When his wrath overcame him, his forehead grew rigid and the muscles formed in the middle of it a delta, or, rather, the horse-shoe of Redgauntlet. This sign terrified you more perhaps than the magnetic lightnings of his blue eyes. A tremor prevailed throughout his entire body, and his strength, already so great in his normal state, became almost boundless. He lisped a great deal. His voice, at least as powerful as that of the Oudet of Charles Nodier, lent an incredible richness of sound to the syllable or the consonant on which this lisping fell. If this fault of pronunciation was graceful in him at certain moments, when he issued his orders at the manœuvres, or when he was excited, you could not imagine how much power, also, was expressed by this accentuation which in Paris is esteemed so common. It would have been necessary for you to have heard it. When the colonel was quiet, his blue eyes took on an angelic softness and his pure forehead bore an expression full of charm. At a parade, in the army of Italy, no man was found able to contest with him. In fact, D'Orsay himself, the handsome D'Orsay, was vanquished by our colonel at the last review held by Napoléon before entering Russia. Everything was in opposition in this privileged man. The passions live by contrast. Therefore you need not ask me if he exercised on women those irresistible influences under which our nature" —here the general looked at the Princesse de Cadignan—"yields like the vitreous matter before

the blow-pipe of the glassmaker; but, by a singular fatality—a close observer might perhaps have explained this phenomenon—the colonel had few affairs of gallantry, or neglected to have them. In order to give you an idea of his violence, I will tell you in two words what I have seen him do in a paroxysm of anger. We were ascending with our cannon a very narrow road, having on one side a sufficiently high slope and on the other a wood. In the middle of the road we encountered another regiment of artillery, at the head of which marched the colonel. This colonel wished the captain of our regiment, who was riding at the head of the first battery, to fall back. Naturally, our captain refused; but the colonel made a sign to his first battery to advance, and, notwithstanding the care which the driver took to crowd into the woods, the wheel of the first cannon caught the right leg of our captain and broke it instantly, throwing him over on the other side of his horse. All this was the work of a moment. Our colonel, who was at a short distance, perceived the quarrel, came up at full gallop, passing between the guns and the wood at the risk of being thrown himself, on his back, and arrived on the spot, face to face with the other colonel, at the moment when our captain cried: 'Help!' as he fell. No, our Italian colonel was no longer a man!—A foam, like the froth of champagne, bubbled at his mouth, he growled like a lion. Incapable of uttering a single word, even a cry, he made a terrible sign to his antagonist, indicating

the woods to him and drawing his sabre. The two colonels entered the forest. In two seconds, we saw our colonel's adversary on the ground, his head cleft in two. The soldiers of that regiment gave way for us, ah! *diantre*, and everything was arranged! This captain, whom they had all but killed, and who was yelping in the mire where the wheel of the cannon had thrown him, had for wife a ravishing beauty of Messina, who was not indifferent to our colonel. This circumstance had augmented his fury. This husband was entitled to his protection, he was obliged to defend him as he would the wife herself. Now, in the cabin in which I had received such a welcome beyond the Zembin, this captain was opposite me, and his wife was at the other end of the table, facing the colonel. This native of Messina was a little woman named Rosina, very dark, but carrying in her black, almond-shaped eyes all the ardors of the sun of Sicily. At this moment, she was in a deplorable state of thinness; her cheeks were covered with dust like a fruit that had been exposed to the weather on the highroads. Scarcely clothed in her rags, worn out by the marches, her hair in disorder and matted under a piece of a shawl pulled over her head, she was still womanly; her movements were pretty; her mouth, rosy and dimpled, her white teeth, the shape of her face, of her figure, these charms which misery, cold and indifference had not entirely defaced, still spoke of love to anyone who could think of a woman. Rosina's nature, moreover,

was one of those which, frail in appearance, are still nervous and full of force. The husband's countenance, that of a Piedmontese gentleman, revealed a bantering simplicity, if it is permissible to ally these two words. Courageous, well-informed, he appeared to be ignorant of the liaison which had existed between his wife and the colonel for the last three years. I attributed this indifference to Italian manners, or to some secret of the household; but there was in this man's physiognomy a feature which always inspired one with a certain mistrust. His lower lip, thin and very mobile, drooped at the two extremities, instead of turning upward, which seemed to me to betray a depth of cruelty in this character, in appearance phlegmatic and indolent. You may well imagine that the conversation was not very brilliant when I arrived. My fatigued comrades ate in silence; they naturally asked me a few questions; and we related to each other our misfortunes, intermingling them with reflections upon the campaign, upon the generals, upon their faults, upon the Russians and the cold. A moment after my arrival, the colonel, having finished his meagre repast, wiped his moustache, wished us good evening, threw his dark look on the Italian woman, and said to her: 'Rosina?' Then, without waiting for a reply, he went to lie down in the little storeroom of fodder. The meaning of the colonel's summons was easy to perceive. So that the young woman made an involuntary, indescribable gesture, which revealed at once the vexation

which she should feel in seeing her dependence thus openly proclaimed without any human respect, and in the offence offered to her dignity as wife, or to her husband; but there was also in the contraction of her features, in the violent bringing together of her eyebrows, a sort of presentiment,—she had, perhaps, a prevision of her fate. Rosina remained seated quietly at the table. An instant later, and probably when the colonel was extended on his bed of hay or straw, he repeated: 'Rosina?' The tone of this second appeal was still more brutally interrogative than the first. The colonel's lisp and the number of vowels and final letters which the Italian language permits, revealed all the depotism, the impatience, the will of this man. Rosina paled, but she rose, passed behind us and joined the colonel. All my comrades kept a profound silence; but I, unhappily, I commenced to laugh after having looked at all of them, and my laugh was repeated from mouth to mouth.

" 'Did you laugh?' said the husband in Italian.

" 'Upon my word, comrade,' I answered him, becoming serious again, 'I admit that I was in the wrong, and I ask a thousand pardons of you; and if you are not satisfied with the excuses which I offer you, I am ready to give you satisfaction—'

" 'It is not you who are wrong, it is I!' he replied, coldly.

"Whereupon we all went to bed in the large room, and presently we were all buried in profound slumber. In the morning, each one, without waking his

neighbor, without seeking for a traveling companion, set off again according to his own whim with that species of selfishness which made of our rout one of the most horrible dramas of personal conduct, of sadness and of horror, which ever took place under Heaven. However, at seven or eight hundred steps from our lodging, we nearly all came together again, and we marched in a body, like a flock of geese conducted by the blind despotism of a child. The same necessity drove us all. When we arrived at a little hill from which we could perceive the farmhouse where we had passed the night, we heard cries which resembled the roarings of the lions of the desert, the bellowings of bulls—but no, this clamor could be compared to nothing known. Nevertheless, we distinguished a woman's feeble cry mingled with this horrible and sinister death-agony. We all turned back, a prey to an unutterable sentiment of terror; we no longer saw the house but a vast funeral pile. The habitation, which had been barricaded, was enveloped in flames. The whirlwinds of smoke, carried by the wind, brought to us the hoarse sounds and an indescribable strong odor. At the distance of a few steps from us marched the captain, who had quietly come up and joined the troop; we all looked at him in silence, for no one dared interrogate him; but he, divining our curiosity, turned toward his chest the index finger of his right hand, and with the left indicating the fire:

" 'It was I!' he said in his native tongue.

"We continued our march without making a single observation to him."

"There is nothing more terrible than the revolt of a sheep," said De Marsay.

"It would be frightful to let us go home with this horrible picture in our memories," said Madame de Portenduère. "I shall dream of it—"

"And what should be the punishment of Monsieur de Marsay's first one?" said Lord Dudley, smiling.

"When the English jest, their foils are always buttoned," said Blondet.

"Monsieur Bianchon can tell us," replied De Marsay, addressing me, "for he saw her dying."

"Yes," I said, "and her death was one of the most beautiful that I have ever known. We had passed, the duke and I, the night at the bedside of the dying woman, whose consumption, which had reached its last stages, left no hope, the sacraments had been administered to her the evening before. The duke had fallen asleep. Madame la Duchesse having awakened about four o'clock in the morning, made me, in the most touching manner and with a smile, a friendly sign to let him repose, and yet she was at the point of death! Her thinness had become extraordinary, but her countenance had preserved its features and its contours truly sublime. Her paleness made her skin resemble porcelain behind which a light is placed. Her bright eyes and their color contrasted with this complexion endued with a soft elegance, and there breathed through

her visage an imposing tranquillity. She seemed to pity the duke, and this feeling took its source in a lofty tenderness which apparently no longer recognized any bounds at the approach of death. The silence was profound. The chamber, softly lighted by a lamp, had that appearance common to all sick rooms at the hour of death.

"At this moment the clock struck. The duke awoke, and was in despair at having fallen asleep. I did not see the gesture of impatience by which he expressed the regret that he experienced at having lost sight of his wife during one of the last moments which were allowed her; but it is certain that no one but the dying woman would have been able to have misconstrued it. A statesman, preoccupied with the interests of France, the duke had a thousand of those apparent oddities which cause the geniuses to be mistaken for fools, but the explanation of which is to be found in the exquisite nature and in the exigencies of their minds. He came and took his seat near his wife's bedside, and looked at her earnestly. She put out her hand a little, took that of her husband, clasped it feebly, and, in a voice, soft but full of emotion, she said to him:

"'My poor dear, who now will understand you?'

"Then she died, looking at him."

"The stories which the doctor tells," said the Duc de Rhétoré, "leave very profound impressions."

"But, gentle ones," replied Mademoiselle des Touches.

"Ah! madame," the doctor answered, "I have

terrible histories in my budget; but every recital has its own hour in a conversation, according to that pretty speech reported by Chamfort and said to the Duc de Fronsac: 'There are ten bottles of champagne between your sally and the present moment.'"

"But it is two o'clock in the morning, and the story of Rosina has prepared us," said the mistress of the house.

"Go ahead, Monsieur Bianchon!" was uttered from every side.

The complacent doctor made a sign, and silence prevailed.

"At about a hundred paces from Vendôme, on the banks of the Loir," he said, "there may be seen an old brown house, surmounted by very high roofs, and so completely isolated that there does not exist in the neighborhood either evil-smelling tanyard or wretched inn, such as may be seen on the borders of nearly all the little towns. Before this lodging is a garden opening on the river, and in which the box border, formerly clipped, which defines the alleys, now grows at will. A few willows, born in the Loir, have rapidly grown up as an enclosing hedge, and half conceal the house. Those plants which we call noxious, decorate with their handsome vegetation the slope of the banks. The fruit trees, neglected for the last ten years, no longer produce any harvest, and young shoots form an underwood. Those trained on the trellises resemble hedges of elms. The pathways, formerly sanded, are now

overrun with portulaca; but, to speak truly, there are no longer any indications of paths. From the top of the mountain on which hang the ruins of the old château of the Ducs de Vendôme, the only spot from which the eye can penetrate this enclosure, it would be said that, at some former time difficult to determine, this corner of ground had been the delight of some gentleman interested in roses, in tulips, in horticulture in a word, but above all, a connoisseur in fine fruits. There could be seen an arbor, or rather the remains of an arbor, under which still remained a table which time had not entirely devoured. From the aspect of this garden which no longer existed, the negative joys of the peaceful life which is enjoyed in the provinces might be imagined, as we imagine the existence of a worthy merchant in reading the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the soft and melancholy ideas which take possession of the soul, one of the walls presents a sundial ornamented with this inscription, bourgeoisely Christian: ULTIMAM COGITA! The roofs of this house have horribly fallen in, the window shutters are always closed, the balconies are covered with swallows' nests, the doors remain constantly fastened. Tall grasses have designed by their green outlines, the declivities of the perrons, the ironwork is all rusted. The moon, the sun, the winter, the summer, the snow, have hollowed the wood, shrunk the planks, eaten the paint away.

"The mournful silence which there reigns is troubled only by the birds, the cats, the martens,

the rats and the mice, free to run about, to fight, to devour each other. An invisible hand has everywhere written the word *Mystery*. If, urged by curiosity, you should go to see this house from the side of the street, you would perceive a great gate arched at the top, and in which the country children have made numerous holes. I learned later that this gate had been unused for ten years. Through these irregular openings you could observe the complete harmony which exists between the façade of the garden and that of the courtyard. The same disorder reigns there. Tufts of grass frame the paving stones. Enormous cracks furrow the walls, the blackened tops of which are laced with the thousand festoons of the pellitory plant. The steps of the perron are dislocated, the cord of the bell is decayed, the gutters are broken. 'What fire fallen from Heaven has here struck? What tribunal has commanded that salt shall be sown on this dwelling? Has God been insulted here? Has France been betrayed?' These are the questions you put to yourself. The reptiles rear themselves without replying to you. This empty and deserted house is an immense enigma, the answer to which is known to no one. It was formerly a small fief, and bears the name of *La Grande Bretèche*. During my sojourn in Vendôme, where Desplein had left me in charge of a wealthy patient, the sight of this singular building became one of my keenest pleasures. Was it not better than a ruin? To a ruin are attached some souvenirs of an irrefutable authenticity; but this habitation still

standing, though being slowly demolished by an avenging hand, enclosed a secret, an unknown thought; it betrayed, at the very least, a caprice. More than once, in the evening, I broke through the hedge, now grown wild, which protected this enclosure. I braved the scratchings, I entered this garden without a master, this property which was no longer either public or private; I remained there for entire hours contemplating its disorder. I would not have wished, for the reward of the history which would have explained this curious spectacle, to ask a single question of some garrulous Vendômese. There, I composed delicious romances, I yielded myself up to little debauches of melancholy which filled me with ravishment. If I had known the motive, probably commonplace, of this abandonment, I should have lost the unpublished poesies with which I intoxicated myself. To me, this asylum represented the most varied images of human life, saddened by its misfortunes; it was at one time the air of the cloister, without the inmates; at another, the peace of the cemetery, without the dead who speak to you in their language of epitaphs; to-day, the house of the leprous, to-morrow, that of the Atrides; but it was, above all, of the province, with its introspective ideas, with its life of the hour-glass. I have often wept there, I never laughed there. More than once I have felt involuntary terrors in hearing, over my head, the dull whistling caused by the wings of some hurried wood-pigeon. The soil was damp; it was advisable to

keep a lookout for lizards, vipers and frogs which there moved about with the wild liberty of their natures; it was, above all, necessary not to fear the cold, for in a few minutes you felt a mantle of ice which deposited itself on your shoulders, like the hand of the Commander on the neck of Don Juan. One evening, I shuddered there; the wind had suddenly turned a rusty old weathercock, whose cries resembled a groaning uttered by the building at the moment when I had just completed a drama, sufficiently dark, by which I explained to myself this species of monumental melancholy. I returned to my inn, a prey to sombre thoughts. When I had supped, the hostess entered my chamber with an air of mystery, and said to me:

"'Monsieur, here is Monsieur Regnault.'

"'Who is Monsieur Regnault?'

"'What, monsieur does not know Monsieur Regnault? Ah! that is curious!' she said as she departed.

"Suddenly I saw appear a man, tall, spare, clothed in black, holding his hat in his hand, and who presented himself like a ram ready to rush at his rival, showing to me a receding forehead, a little pointed head, and a pale face, sufficiently like a glass of dirty water. You would have said that he was the doorkeeper of a minister. This unknown wore an old coat, very much worn at the folds; but he had a diamond in the jabot of his shirt, and gold rings in his ears.

"'Monsieur, to whom have I the honor of speaking?' I said to him.

"He seated himself on a chair, placed himself before my fire, deposited his hat on my table, and replied to me, rubbing his hands:

"'Ah! it is very cold! Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault.'

"I bowed, saying to myself:

"'*Il Bondocani!* Look for him!'

"'I am,' he went on, 'a notary of Vendôme.'

"'I am delighted to hear it, monsieur,' I cried, 'but I am not in a condition to make my will, for certain reasons known to myself.'

"'Just a minute!' he replied, lifting his hand as if to impose silence upon me. 'Permit me, monsieur! permit me! I have learned that you go to walk sometimes in the garden of La Grande-Bretèche.'

"'Yes, monsieur.'

"'Just a moment!' he said, repeating his gesture; 'this action constitutes a veritable misdemeanor. Monsieur, I have come, in the name and as executor of the testament of the late Madame la Comtesse de Merret, to beg of you to discontinue your visits. Just a moment! I am not a Turk, and do not wish to attribute a crime to you. Moreover, it is quite permissible in you to be ignorant of the circumstances which compel me to allow to go to ruin the finest hôtel in Vendôme. However, monsieur, you appear to be educated, and should know that the laws forbid, under severe penalties, trespassing on an enclosed property. A hedge is as much as a wall. But the state in which the house is, may

serve as an excuse for your curiosity. I should not ask anything better than to leave you free to go and come in that building; but, charged with the duty of carrying out the wishes of the testatrix, I have the honor, monsieur, to request you not to enter the garden again. I, myself, monsieur, since the opening of the will, I have not set foot in that house, which is a part, as I have had the honor to say to you, of the succession of Madame de Merret. We have only verified the doors and windows, in order to ascertain the taxes which I pay annually from the funds destined for this purpose by the late Madame la Comtesse. Ah! my dear monsieur, her will made a great sensation in Vendôme!'

"There, he stopped to blow his nose, the worthy man! I respected his loquacity, comprehending marvelously well that the succession of the estate of Madame de Merret was the most important event of his life, all his reputation, his glory, his Restoration. It would be necessary for me to bid farewell to my beautiful reveries, to my romances; I was not then unwilling to have the pleasure of learning the truth in an official manner.

"'Monsieur,' I said to him, 'would it be indiscreet to ask of you the reasons for this oddity?'

"At these words, an air which expressed all the pleasure experienced by men accustomed to mount upon their *hobby-horses* passed over the face of the notary. He plucked up the collar of his shirt with a sort of fatuity, drew out his snuff-box, opened it, offered the tobacco to me, and, on my refusal, took

a famous pinch himself. He was happy! A man who has no hobby-horse is ignorant of all the profit that may be drawn from life. A hobby-horse is the precise middle between passion and monomania. At that moment, I comprehended that charming expression of Sterne in all its extent, and I had a complete idea of the joy with which Uncle Toby bestrode, Trim aiding him, his war horse.

"'Monsieur,' said Monsieur Regnault to me, 'I was head clerk to Maître Roguin, at Paris. An excellent office, of which you have perhaps heard? No? However, an unfortunate failure rendered it celebrated. Not having sufficient fortune to carry on my profession in Paris, at the high prices which practices obtained in 1816, I came here to purchase the business of my predecessor. I had relatives in Vendôme, among others a very wealthy aunt, who gave me her daughter in marriage.—Monsieur,' he resumed after a slight pause, 'three months after having been accepted by Monseigneur, the Keeper of the Seals, I was summoned one evening, just as I was about to retire—I was not yet married—by Madame la Comtesse de Merret, to her château de Merret. Her femme de chambre, an honest girl who is to-day in service in this inn, was at my door with the calèche of Madame la Comtesse. Ah! just a moment!—It is necessary to say to you, monsieur, that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to die in Paris two months before I came here. He had there perished miserably, giving himself up to excesses of every description. You understand?

The day of his departure, Madame la Comtesse had left La Grande-Bretèche and had unfurnished it. Some persons even pretend that she burned the furniture, the tapestries, in short, everything whatever that filled the dwellings at present leased by the aforesaid sieur—but hold on, what am I saying here? Pardon me, I thought I was dictating a lease —that she burned them,' he went on, 'in the meadows of Merret. Have you been to Merret, monsieur? No?' he said, replying for me. 'Ah! it is a very beautiful place! For about three months,' he said, continuing with a slight shaking of the head, 'Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse had lived in a singular manner; they no longer received anyone, madame inhabited the ground floor and monsieur the first story. When Madame la Comtesse was left alone, she no longer showed herself but at church. Later, in her own home, at the château, she refused to see the friends, male and female, who came to pay her visits. She was already very much changed when she left La Grande-Bretèche to go to Merret. This dear woman —I say "dear," because this diamond came to me from her, and yet I never saw her but once!— then, this good lady was very ill; she had, doubtless, given up all hope of her health, for she died without wishing to have any physician called in; for this reason many of our ladies have thought that she was not in the full possession of her faculties. Monsieur, my curiosity was then singularly excited on learning that Madame de Merret had need

of my services. I was not the only one who was interested in this history. That very evening, although it was late, all the town knew that I had gone to Merret. The femme de chambre replied with sufficient vagueness to the questions which I put to her on the road; nevertheless she said to me that her mistress had received the sacraments from the curé of Merret during the day, and that it seemed that she could not live through the night. I arrived at the château about eleven o'clock. I mounted the grand stairway. After having traversed the great apartments, high and black, cold and damp as the devil, I reached the bedchamber of honor in which was Madame la Comtesse. According to the stories which had been current about this lady—monsieur, I should never finish if I repeated to you all the tales which had been told concerning her!—I had imagined her to myself as a coquette. If you can conceive it, I had great difficulty in discovering her in the great bed in which she was lying. It is true that to light this enormous chamber, with its friezes of the style of the ancient régime, and powdered with dust thickly enough to make you sneeze only in looking at them, she had one of those ancient Argand lamps. Ah! but you have never been to Merret! Well, monsieur, the bed was one of those beds of former times, with a lofty canopy ornamented with flowered chintz. A little night table was near the bed, and I saw upon it an *Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, which, parenthetically, I afterward bought for my wife, also

the lamp. There was also a large sofa for the confidential woman, and two chairs. No fire, moreover. This was the furniture. It would not have taken up ten lines in an inventory. Ah! my dear monsieur, if you had seen, as I saw then, this vast chamber hung with brown tapestries, you would have thought yourself transported into a veritable scene of romance. It was icy, and more than that, funereal,' he added, raising his arm with a theatrical gesture and making a pause. 'By dint of looking, in going close to the bed, I ended by seeing Madame de Merret, thanks again to the flame of the lamp, the light from which fell on the pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax, and resembled two hands placed together. Madame la Comtesse had a lace cap which permitted to be seen her beautiful hair, as white as cotton thread. She was sitting up, and appeared to maintain that position with much difficulty. Her great, black eyes, dulled by the fever, doubtless, and already almost extinguished, scarcely moved under the bones which were her eyebrows. There,' said he, indicating the arch of his brows. 'Her forehead was damp. Her fleshless hands resembled bones covered by a stretched skin; their veins, their muscles, were perfectly visible. She must have been very beautiful; but, at this moment, I was seized with an indescribable feeling at her aspect. Never, according to those who laid her out, had a living creature attained to such thinness without dying. In short, it was frightful to see! A long torment had so devoured this

woman that she was no longer anything but a phantom. Her lips, of a pale violet, appeared to me to be motionless when she spoke to me. Although my profession had familiarized me with these spectacles by bringing me sometimes to the bedside of the dying to receive their last wishes, I avow that the families in tears and the agonies which I have seen were as nothing compared with this solitary and silent woman in this vast château. I did not hear the least sound, I did not see the movement which the respiration of the sick person should give to the draperies which covered her, and I remained perfectly motionless, occupied in looking at her in a sort of stupor. It seems to me that I am there still. Finally, her great eyes moved, she endeavored to lift her right hand which fell back upon the bed, and these words issued from her mouth like a whisper, for her voice was already no longer a voice: "I have waited for you with much impatience." Her cheeks colored up quickly. To speak, monsieur, was a great effort for her. "Madame—" I said to her. She made me a sign to keep silent. At this moment, the old woman in charge rose and said to me in my ear:—"Do not speak, Madame la Comtesse is not in a condition to hear the least noise; and what you would say to her might agitate her." I sat down. A few moments afterward, Madame de Merret assembled all that remained of her forces to move her right arm, put it, not without infinite pains, under her bolster; there she stopped for a brief moment; then

she made a last effort to withdraw her hand, and, when she had taken a sealed paper, the drops of sweat fell from her brow. "I confide to you my testament—" she said. "Ah! *Mon Dieu!* ah!" That was all. She seized a crucifix which was on her bed, carried it rapidly to her lips, and died. The expression of her fixed eyes makes me shiver yet when I think of it. She must have greatly suffered! There was joy in her last look, and the expression remained graven on her dead eyes. I carried away the testament; and when it was opened, I saw that Madame de Merret had named me as her testamentary executor. She bequeathed the whole of her property to the hospital of Vendôme, with the exception of some particular legacies. But these were her dispositions relative to La Grande-Bretèche. She directed me to leave this house during fifty complete years from the day of her death, in the state in which it was at the moment of her decease, forbidding the entrance into the apartments to anyone whatsoever, prohibiting the slightest restoration, and even allowing an annual sum to secure guardians, if they should be necessary, to assure the complete execution of her intentions. At the expiration of this term, if the will of the testatrix has been accomplished, the house shall go to my heirs, for monsieur knows that the notaries cannot accept legacies; otherwise, La Grande-Bretèche would go to whomsoever had the right, but with the charge to fulfil the conditions indicated in a codicil annexed to the testament, and

which shall not be opened until the expiration of the aforesaid fifty years. The testament has not been attacked; then—'

"With this word, and without finishing his phrase, the elongated notary looked at me with an air of triumph. I rendered him completely happy by addressing a few compliments to him.

"'Monsieur,' I said to him, 'you have so greatly impressed me that I think I see this dying woman more pale than her sheets; her gleaming eyes make me afraid; and I shall dream of her this night. But you must have formed some conjectures on the dispositions contained in this grotesque will.'

"'Monsieur,' he said to me with a comic reserve, 'I never permit myself to judge the conduct of those persons who have honored me with the gift of a diamond.'

"I presently unloosened the tongue of the scrupulous Vendômese notary, who communicated to me, not without long digressions, observations gathered from the profound politicians of both sexes whose decrees constitute the law in Vendôme. But these observations were so contradictory, so diffuse, that I all but went to sleep, notwithstanding the interest which I took in this authentic history. The heavy tone and the monotonous accent of this notary, doubtless accustomed to listening to himself, and to obtaining an audience from his clients or his compatriots, triumphed over my curiosity. Luckily, he went away.

"Ah! ah! monsieur, plenty of people,' he said

to me on the stairway, 'would wish to live forty-five years longer; but, just a moment!'—

"And he placed, with a sly air, the index finger of his right hand on his nostril, as if to say:—'Pay particular attention to this!'

"'To be able to go that far, that far,' he said, 'it is not necessary to be threescore.'

"I closed my door, having been roused from my apathy by this last shaft, which the notary considered excessively clever; then I seated myself in my armchair, putting my feet on the two andirons of my chimney-place. I proceeded to bury myself in an imaginary romance of the style of Mrs. Radcliffe, founded upon the juridical indications given by Monsieur Regnault, when my door, managed by the skilful hand of a woman, turned upon its hinges. I saw my landlady enter, a plump, jovial woman, always good-humored, who had missed her vocation,—she was a Flemish wench who should have been born in a picture by Teniers.

"'Well, monsieur,' she said to me, 'Monsieur Regnault has doubtless gone over again to you his story of La Grande-Bretèche?'

"'Yes, Mère Lepas.'

"'What did he say to you?'

"I repeated to her in a few words the cold and gloomy history of Madame de Merret. At each phrase my hostess stretched her neck, looking at me with the perspicacity of an innkeeper, a species of just medium between the instinct of the gendarme, the craft of a spy and the shrewdness of the trader.

"'My dear Madame Lepas,' I added as I finished, 'you appear to know more about this, hein? Otherwise, why have you come up here to my room?'

"'Ah! on the word of an honest woman, just as true as that my name is Lepas—'

"'Do not swear, your eyes are bursting with a secret. You knew Monsieur de Merret. What kind of a man was he?'

"'Bless me! Monsieur de Merret, you see, was a fine man, whom you never finished seeing, he was so tall! a worthy gentleman come from Picardie, and who had, as we say here, his head very near his cap. He paid cash down so as to have difficulties with no one. You see, he was lively. We women all found him very pleasant.'

"'Because he was lively?' I said to my hostess.

"'Very likely,' she said. 'You may well imagine, monsieur, that it was necessary to have had something before one, as they say, to have married Madame de Merret, who, without wishing to speak evil of the others, was the most beautiful and the richest woman in Vendôme. She had an income of about twenty thousand francs. The whole city was present at the wedding. The bride was delicate and genteel, a real jewel of a woman. Ah! they were a fine couple in those days!'

"'Were they happy together?'

"'Heu! heu! yes and no, as much as one could guess, for you can well imagine that we, we others, did not exactly share their roast and boiled with them. Madame de Merret was a good woman, very

nice, who had perhaps to suffer a good deal at times from the liveliness of her husband; but, although he was a little proud, we loved him. Bah! that was his style, to be like that! When one is noble, do you see—'

"'Nevertheless, there must evidently have been some catastrophe for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to separate violently?'

"'I did not say that there had been any catastrophe, monsieur. I know nothing about it.'

"'Good. I am sure now that you know all about it.'

"'Ah! well, monsieur, I will tell you all. When I saw Monsieur Regnault come up to see you, I had an idea that he would talk to you of Madame de Merret, apropos of La Grande-Bretèche. This put it into my head to consult monsieur, who seemed to me to be a man of good judgment and incapable of betraying a poor woman like myself, who has never done harm to anyone, and who, however, is troubled by her conscience. Up to this time, I have never dared to open my heart to the people round here, they are all gossips with sharp tongues. In short, monsieur, I have never yet had a traveler who has stayed as long in my inn as you have, and to whom I could tell the history of the fifteen thousand francs—'

"'My dear Dame Lepas,' I replied, arresting the flood of her words, 'if your confidence is of a nature to compromise me, I would not be charged with it for anything in the world.'

"'You need fear nothing,' she said, interrupting me. 'You will see.'

"This earnestness led me to believe that I was not the only one to whom my good innkeeper had communicated the secret of which I was to be the sole recipient, and I listened.

"'Monsieur,' she said, 'when the Emperor sent down here, the Spanish or other prisoners of war, I had as a lodger, at the charge of the government, a young Spaniard sent to Vendôme on parole. Notwithstanding his parole, he went every day to show himself to the sous-préfet. He was a grandee of Spain! Excuse me a moment! He had a name in *os* and in *dia*, like Bagos de Férédia. I have his name written down on my register; you can read it there if you wish to. Oh! he was a fine young man for a Spaniard, who, they say, are all ugly. He was only five feet two or three inches tall, but he was well-shaped; he had little hands of which he took such care, ah! you should have seen it. He had as many brushes for his hands as a woman has for all her toilets! He had black hair, great eyes of fire, a complexion somewhat copper-colored, but which I liked all the same. He wore the finest linen that I have ever seen on anyone, though I have had princesses for lodgers, and, among others, General Bertrand, the Duc and the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Monsieur Decazes and the King of Spain. He did not eat very much, but his manners were so polite, so considerate, that you could not find fault with him. Oh! I liked him very much,

although he did not utter four words a day and though it was impossible to have the least conversation with him; if you spoke to him, he did not reply,—it is a whim, a mania, that they all have, so I am told. He read his breviary like a priest, he went to the mass and to all the services regularly. Where did he seat himself? We noticed this later,—at two steps from the chapel of Madame de Merret. As he placed himself there the very first time that he went to the church, no one imagined that there was any previous intention in his action. Moreover, he did not lift his nose above his prayer-book, the poor young man! At that time, monsieur, he used to go to walk in the evenings on the mountain, in the ruins of the château. This was his only amusement, this poor man, he was there reminded of his own country. They say that in Spain it is all mountains. After the first days of his detention, he came home late. I was anxious at not seeing him return till the stroke of midnight; but we all became used to his whims; he took the key of the door with him, and we no longer sat up for him. He lodged in the house which we have in the Rue des Casernes. At that time, one of our stable boys told us that one evening when he was taking the horses into the water, he thought he saw the grandee of Spain swimming far out in the river like a real fish. When he returned, I said to him to take care of the water-grasses; he appeared to be vexed to have been seen in the river. Finally, monsieur, one day, or rather, one morning, we did not find him in his

chamber; he had not returned. By searching everywhere, I saw a writing in a drawer in his table, where there were fifty pieces of Spanish gold which are called *portugaises* and which were worth about five thousand francs; then some diamonds, worth ten thousand francs, in a little box hidden away. His writing said that in case he did not return, he left to us this money and these diamonds on condition that we had masses sung to thank God for his escape and for his soul. At that time, I still had my husband, who ran all over searching for him. And here is the queer part of the story! he brought back the Spaniard's clothes which he had discovered under a great stone, among some sort of piles on the bank of the river, on the side of the château, almost opposite La Grande-Bretèche. My husband had gone there so early in the morning that no one had seen him. He burned the clothes after having read the letter, and we declared, according to the desire of the Comte Férédia, that he had escaped. The sous-préfet put all the gendarmerie on his trail; but *brust!* they did not catch him. Lepas believed that the Spaniard had been drowned. I, monsieur, I do not think so at all; I believe rather that he had something to do in the affair of Madame de Merret, seeing that Rosalie told me that the crucifix to which her mistress was so much attached that she caused it to be buried with her, was of ebony and silver; now, in the beginning of his stay here, Monsieur Férédia had one of ebony and silver which I never saw with him again. Now, monsieur, is it not true

that I need have no remorse concerning the fifteen thousand francs of the Spaniard, and that they really belong to me?'

"'Certainly. But you have not tried to question Rosalie?' I said to her.

"'Oh! yes I have, monsieur. What would you do! that girl there, she is a wall. She knows something, but it is impossible to make her blab.'

"After having talked a few moments longer with me, my hostess left me a prey to vague and shadowy thoughts, to a romantic curiosity, to a religious terror sufficiently like that profound feeling that takes possession of us when we enter at night into some sombre church where we perceive a feeble, distant light under the lofty arches; an undecided figure slips along, the rustle of a robe or of a cassock is heard—we shiver. La Grande-Bretèche and its tall weeds, its condemned windows, its rusted ironwork, its closed doors, its deserted apartments, suddenly rose fantastically before me. I endeavored to penetrate into this mysterious dwelling by seeking for the clew to this solemn history, the drama that had killed three persons. Rosalie was, in my eyes, the most interesting being in Vendôme. I discovered, in examining her, traces of some inmost thought, notwithstanding the brilliant health which glowed on her plump visage. There was in her some principle of remorse or of hope; her attitude announced a secret, like that of the devotees who pray to excess or that of the young girl who has committed infanticide and who hears always the

last cry of her infant. Her appearance was, however, ingenuous and coarse, her silly smile had in it nothing criminal, and you would have thought her innocent only to see the great handkerchief with red and blue squares which covered her vigorous bust, framed, clasped, set off by a dress with white and violet stripes.

"'No,' I thought, 'I will not leave Vendôme without knowing all the history of La Grande-Bretèche. In order to attain my object, I will become Rosalie's friend, if it is absolutely necessary.'

"'Rosalie?' I said to her one evening.

"'What is it, monsieur?'

"'You are not married?'

"She shuddered slightly.

"'Oh! I shall not want for men when I take a notion to be unhappy!' she said, laughing.

"She recovered promptly from her inward emotion, for all women, from the great lady to the servant in an inn, inclusive, have a self-possession which is peculiar to them.

"'You are fresh enough, tempting enough, not to lack for lovers! But, tell me, Rosalie, why is it that you became servant in an inn when you left Madame de Merret? Is it because she did not leave you any income?'

"'Oh! yes she did. But, monsieur, my place is the best in Vendôme.'

"This answer was one of those which the judges and the lawyers call *dilatory*. Rosalie appeared to me to be situated in this romantic story like the

square which is in the very centre of the chess-board; she was at the heart of the interest and the truth; she seemed to me to be tied up in the clew. This was no longer an ordinary seduction to undertake; there was in this girl the last chapter of a romance; therefore, from that moment, Rosalie became the object of my predilection. By studying this girl I discovered in her, as in all women who chiefly occupy our thoughts, a multitude of qualities,—she was clean, careful; she was handsome, that goes without saying; she had presently all the attractions which our desire lends to women, in whatever situation they may be. Two weeks after the notary's visit, one evening, or, rather, one morning, for it was very early, I said to Rosalie:

"'Tell me then all that you know about Madame de Merret?'

"'Oh!' she answered in terror, 'do not ask me that, Monsieur Horace!'

"Her pretty face darkened, her lively and animated color paled, and her eyes had no longer their humid, innocent light. I insisted, however.

"'Well,' she replied, 'since you wish, I will tell it to you; keep my secret for me well!'

"'Come, my poor girl, I will keep all your secrets with the honesty of a thief, which is the most loyal that there is.'

"'If it is all the same to you,' she said to me, 'I would like better that it should be with your own.'

"Thereupon, she readjusted her foulard, and arranged herself as if to relate; for there is, certainly,

an attitude of confidence and of security necessary in order to make a recital. The best narrations are given at a certain hour, as we are all here at table. No one has ever told a tale well while standing, or fasting. But, if it were necessary to reproduce faithfully the diffuse eloquence of Rosalie, an entire volume would scarcely suffice. Now, as the event of which she gave me her confused knowledge was placed between the gossip of the notary and that of Madame Lepas as exactly as the middle terms of an arithmetical proportion are between the two extremes, I have only to give it to you in a few words. I therefore abridge.

"The chamber which Madame de Merret occupied at La Bretèche was situated on the ground floor. A little cabinet of about four feet in depth, set into the thickness of the wall, served as her wardrobe. Three months before the evening, the events of which I am about to relate to you, Madame de Merret had been so seriously indisposed that her husband had left her alone in her apartments, and he slept in a chamber on the first floor. By one of those chances impossible to foresee, he returned, on this evening, two hours later than was his custom, from the club where he was in the habit of going to read the journals and talk politics with the inhabitants of the country. His wife believed him to have returned, to be abed and asleep. But the invasion of France had been the subject of a very animated discussion; the billiard players had become excited, he had lost forty francs, an enormous

sum for Vendôme, where everybody hoards up, and where the habits are restrained within the limits of a modesty worthy of eulogy, which becomes perhaps the source of a true happiness unknown to any Parisian. For a certain period Monsieur de Merret had been in the habit of contenting himself with asking Rosalie if his wife had retired; upon the always affirmative reply of this girl, he immediately went off to his own apartments with that good nature which springs from habit and confidence. On entering, this evening, he conceived the idea of going to see Madame de Merret to relate to her his misadventure, perhaps also to console himself. During the dinner, he had noticed that Madame de Merret was coquettishly arrayed; he had said to himself, in returning home from the club, that his wife was no longer suffering, that her convalescence had embellished her, and he had perceived it, as the husbands perceive everything, a little late. Instead of calling Rosalie, who at that moment was occupied in the kitchen, watching the cook and the coachman playing a difficult game of *brisque* with the cards, Monsieur de Merret directed his steps towards his wife's chamber by the light of his large lantern which he had set down on the first step of the stairway. His footsteps, easily recognizable, resounded under the archway of the corridor. At the moment when the gentleman turned the key of his wife's chamber, he thought he heard being closed the door of the cabinet of which I have spoken to you; but when he entered, Madame de Merret was alone,

standing before the chimney-place. The husband thought naively to himself that Rosalie was in the cabinet; however, a suspicion which sounded in his ear with the noise of a bell awakened his mistrust; he looked at his wife and discovered in her eyes something indefinable of trouble and of wildness.

"'You return very late,' she said.

"This voice, usually so pure and so gracious, seemed to him slightly altered. Monsieur de Merret made no reply, for, at that moment, Rosalie entered. This was a thunderstroke for him. He walked about in the chamber, going from one window to the other with a uniform movement and with his arms folded.

"'Have you heard some bad news, or are you suffering?' asked his wife of him timidly, while Rosalie aided her to undress.

"He maintained his silence.

"'You may retire,' said Madame de Merret to her femme de chambre, 'I will put my hair in curl-papers myself.'

"She divined some misfortune from the mere aspect of her husband's countenance, and wished to be alone with him. As soon as Rosalie had departed, or was thought to have departed, for she remained for some moments in the corridor, Monsieur de Merret came and placed himself before his wife and said to her coldly:

"'Madame, there is someone in your cabinet!'

"She looked at her husband with a calm air and replied to him with simplicity:

"'No, monsieur.'

"This *no* wounded Monsieur de Merret, he did not believe it; and yet his wife had never appeared to him more pure and more religious than she seemed to be at that moment. He rose to go and open the cabinet; Madame de Merret took him by the hand, stopped him, looked at him with a melancholy air and said to him in a voice singularly full of emotion:

"'If you find no one, reflect that all will be finished between us!'

"The incredible dignity in the attitude of his wife filled the gentleman with a profound esteem for her, and inspired in him one of those resolutions which require only a vaster theatre in order to become immortal.

"'No,' said he, 'Joséphine, I will not go. In either case, we should be separated forever. Listen, I know all the purity of your soul, and that you lead a saintly life, you would not commit a mortal sin to save your life.'

"At these words, Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a haggard eye.

"'See, here is your crucifix,' added this man. 'Swear to me before God that there is no one there, I will believe you, I will never open that door.'

"Madame de Merret took the crucifix and said:

"'I swear it.'

"'Louder,' said the husband, 'and repeat: 'I swear before God that there is no one in that cabinet.'

"She repeated the phrase, showing no trouble.

"'That is well,' said Monsieur de Merret, coldly.

"After a moment of silence:

"'You have a very beautiful thing which I did not know you possessed,' said he, examining this crucifix of ebony incrusted with silver, and very artistically carved.

"'I found it at Duvivier's, who, when that troop of prisoners passed through Vendôme last year, purchased it from a Spanish monk.'

"'Ah!' said Monsieur de Merret, hanging the crucifix again on its nail.

"And he rang. Rosalie did not make herself waited for. Monsieur de Merret went quickly to meet her, led her into the embrasure of the window which opens on the garden, and said to her in a low voice:

"'I know that Gorenflot wishes to marry you, poverty alone prevents you from setting up housekeeping, and you have said to him that you will not be his wife unless he finds means to establish himself as a master-mason—Well, go and get him, tell him to come here with his trowel and his tools. Manage it so as to awaken no one but him in his house; his fortune will surpass all your desires. Above all, go out of here without gabbling, if not—'

"He knit his brows. Rosalie went, he called her back.

"'Here, take my pass-key,' he said.

"'Jean!' cried Monsieur de Merret with a thundering voice in the corridor.

"Jean, who was at once his coachman and his confidential man, left his game of brisque and came.

"'Go to bed, all of you,' said his master to him, making him a sign to draw near.

"And the gentleman added, but in a low voice:

"'When they are all asleep, *asleep*, do you understand? you will come down and let me know.'

"Monsieur de Merret, who had not lost sight of his wife while giving his orders, returned quietly to her before the fire, and began to relate to her the events of the game of billiards and the discussions at the club. When Rosalie returned, she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret talking together in a very friendly manner. The gentleman had recently had ceiled all the rooms which constituted his reception apartment on the ground floor. Plaster is very scarce in Vendôme, and transportation greatly increases the cost; the gentleman had therefore caused to be brought a sufficiently large quantity, knowing that he would always find plenty of purchasers for all that he had left over. This circumstance had suggested to him the design which he put into execution.

"'Monsieur, Gorenflot is here,' said Rosalie to him in a low tone.

"'Let him come in!' replied the Picard gentleman, aloud.

Madame de Merret paled slightly when she saw the mason.

"'Gorenflot,' said the husband, 'go and get some bricks under the coach-house and bring enough of

them to wall up the door of that cabinet; you will coat the wall with the plaster which I had left over.'

"Then, drawing Rosalie and the workman aside:

"'Listen, Gorenflot,' he said in a low voice, 'you will sleep here to-night. But, to-morrow morning, you will have a passport which will take you abroad, to a city which I will indicate to you. I will give you six thousand francs for your journey. You will remain ten years in that city; if you are not contented there, you can establish yourself in another, provided that it is in the same country. You will go through Paris, where you will wait for me. There, I will guarantee to you by contract six thousand francs more which will be paid to you on your return, if you have fulfilled the conditions of our bargain. At this price, you will keep the most profound silence concerning that which you have done here this night.—As for you, Rosalie, I will give you ten thousand francs which shall be paid to you on your wedding day, and on the condition that you marry Gorenflot; but, to marry each other, it will be necessary to keep silence. If not, no dot.'

"'Rosalie,' said Madame de Merret, 'come and do my hair.'

"The husband walked quietly backward and forward, watching the door, the mason and his wife, but without allowing to appear any injurious suspicion. Gorenflot was obliged to make some noise. Madame de Merret seized a moment when the workman emptied some bricks, and when her husband

was at the other end of the chamber, to say to Rosalie:

"'A thousand francs of income for you, my dear child, if you can tell Gorenflot to leave a crack at the bottom.'

"Then, aloud, she said to her calmly:

"'Go and help him!'

"Monsieur and Madame de Merret remained silent during the whole time that Gorenflot took to wall up the door. This silence was calculated on the part of the husband, who did not wish to give his wife an opportunity to throw out words with double meanings; and with Madame de Merret it was prudence or pride. When the wall was at half its height, the crafty mason seized the opportunity, when the husband had his back turned, to give a stroke with his pick through one of the two glasses of the door. This action made Madame de Merret comprehend that Rosalie had spoken to Gorenflot. All three of them saw then the face of a man sombre and dark, with black hair and fiery eyes. Before her husband could turn round, the poor wife had time to make a sign with her head to the stranger, for whom this sign meant: 'Hope!' At four o'clock, toward daybreak, for they were then in the month of September, the construction was finished. The mason remained under guard by Jean, and Monsieur de Merret slept in his wife's chamber. The next morning, on rising, he said carelessly:

"'Ah! the deuce, I must go to the mayor's office for the passport.'

"He put his hat on his head, made three steps toward the door, changed his mind, took the crucifix. His wife trembled with happiness.

"'He is going to Duvivier's,' she thought.

"As soon as the gentleman had gone out, Madame de Merret rang for Rosalie; then, in a terrible voice:

"'The pickaxe! the pickaxe!' she cried, 'and to work! I saw yesterday how Gorenflot understood, we shall have the time to make a hole and to stop it up again.'

"In the twinkling of an eye Rosalie brought a kind of axe to her mistress, who, with an ardor of which nothing can give an idea, set to work to demolishing the wall. She had already brought down several bricks when, recoiling a little for a still more vigorous stroke than the others, she saw Monsieur de Merret behind her; she fainted.

"'Put madame on her bed,' said the gentleman, coldly.

"Foreseeing what would happen during his absence, he had set a trap for his wife; he had simply written to the mayor, and sent for Duvivier. The jeweler arrived just at the moment when the disorder in the apartment had been repaired.

"'Duvivier,' asked the gentleman of him, 'did you not buy some crucifixes of the Spaniards who passed through here?'

"'No, monsieur.'

"'Well, I am obliged to you,' he said, exchanging with his wife the glance of a tiger. 'Jean,' he

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MADAME DE MERRET'S CHAMBER.

"The crafty mason seized the opportunity, when the husband had his back turned, to give a stroke with his pick through one of the glasses of the door. This action made Madame de Merret comprehend that Rosalie had spoken to Gorenflot. All three of them saw then the face of a man sombre and dark, with black hair and fiery eyes. Before her husband could turn round, the poor wife had time to make a sign with her head to the stranger, for whom this sign meant: 'Hope!'"

"He put his hat on his head, made three steps toward the door, changed his mind, took the crucifix. His wife trembled with happiness.

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"In the twinkling of an eye Rosalie brought a kind of axe to her mistress, who, with an ardor of which nothing can give an idea, set to work to demolish the wall. She had already brought down several bricks when, recognizing at last Monsieur de Merret behind her, she fainted.

"'But madame was not dead,' said the gentleman, coldly.

"Foreseeing what would happen during his absence, he had set a trap for his wife; he had simply written to the mayor, and sent for Duvivier. The jeweler arrived just at the moment when the disorder in the apartment had been repaired.

"'Duvivier,' asked the gentleman of him, 'did you not buy some crucifixes of the Spaniards who passed through here?'

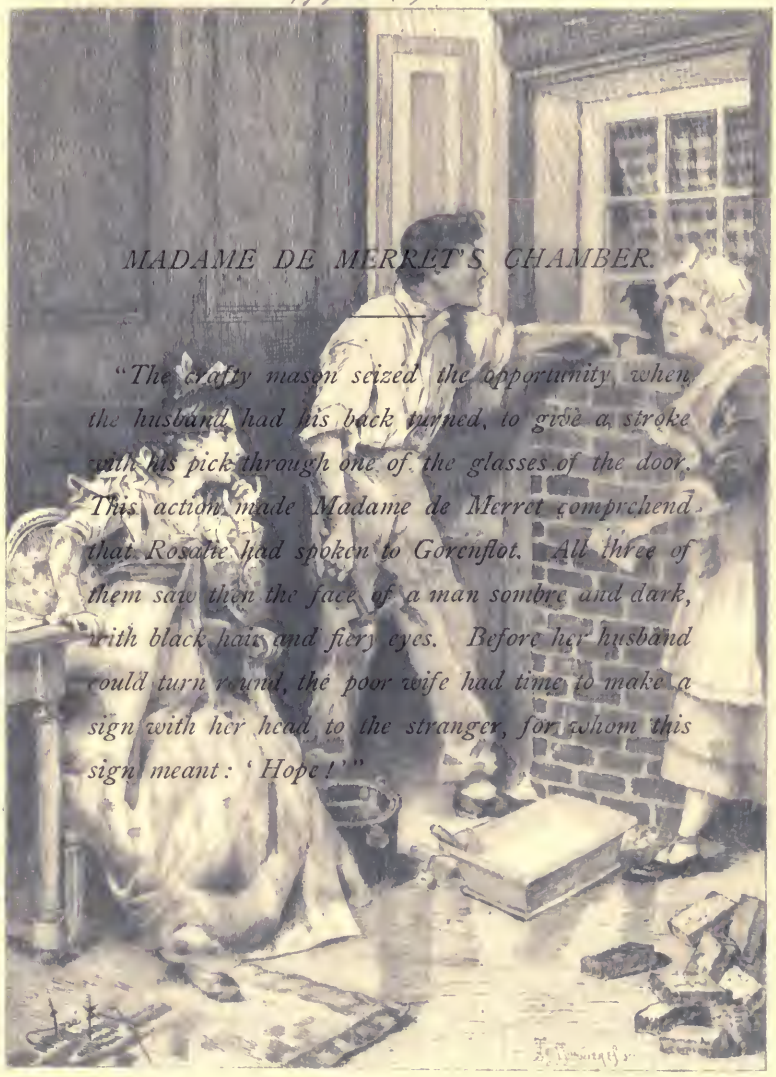
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added, turning towards his confidential valet, 'you will have my repasts served in the chamber of Madame de Merret, she is unwell, and I will not leave her until her health is re-established.'

"The cruel gentleman remained for twenty days by the side of his wife. During the first moments, when some sounds could be heard in the walled-up cabinet and when Joséphine wished to entreat him for the dying unknown, he replied to her, without permitting her to say a single word:

" 'You have sworn on the cross that there was no one there.' "

After this recital, all the women rose from the table, and the charm under which Bianchon had held them was dissipated by this movement. Nevertheless, some among them had had something like a chill on hearing the last word.

Paris, 1839–1842.

THE PRETENDED MISTRESS

TO THE COMTESSE CLARA MAFFEI

THE PRETENDED MISTRESS

*

In the month of September, 1835, one of the richest heiresses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, only daughter of the Marquis du Rouvre, married the Count Adam Mitgislas Laginski, a young Pole banished and proscribed. Would that it were permitted to write names as they are pronounced, so as to spare the reader the aspect of the fortification of consonants by which the Slavish tongue protects its vowels, doubtless in order not to lose any of them, considering their restricted number. The Marquis du Rouvre had almost entirely dissipated one of the finest fortunes of the nobility, to which he had formerly been indebted for his alliance with a Demoiselle De Ronquerolles. Thus, on the maternal side, Clémentine du Rouvre had for uncle the Marquis de Ronquerolles and for aunt, Madame de Sérizy. On the paternal side, she possessed another uncle in the grotesque personage of the Chevalier du Rouvre, youngest son of the house, an old bachelor who had become rich in trafficking in estates and houses. The Marquis de Ronquerolles had the misfortune to lose his two

children during the invasion of the cholera. The only son of Madame de Sérizy, a young soldier of the most brilliant promise, perished in Africa at the affair of La Macta. To-day, the rich families are between the danger of ruining their children, if they have too many of them, and that of extinguishing themselves in restricting themselves to only one or two,—a singular effect of the Civil Code of which Napoléon had not dreamed. By a caprice of fortune, notwithstanding the senseless extravagances of the Marquis du Rouvre for Florine, one of the most charming actresses of Paris, Clémentine thus became an heiress. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, one of the most skilful diplomats of the new dynasty; his sister, Madame de Sérizy, and the Chevalier du Rouvre covenanted to save their fortunes from the claws of the marquis by disposing of them in favor of their niece, to whom each of them promised to assure, on the day of her marriage, ten thousand francs income.

It is perfectly useless to say that the Poles, although refugees, cost absolutely nothing to the French government. The Count Adam belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Poland, allied to the greater number of the princely houses of Germany, to the Sapiéha, to the Radzivill, to the Rzewuski, to the Czartoriski, to the Leczinski, to the Iablonoski, to the Lubomirski, to all the grand Sarmatic *kis*. But it is not great heraldic knowledge which distinguishes France under Louis-Philippe, and this nobility could not be much

of a recommendation to the bourgeoisie who were then enthroned. Moreover, when in 1833, Adam showed himself on the Boulevard des Italiens, at Frascati, at the Jockey Club, he led the life of a young man who, losing his political hopes, found again his vices and his love for pleasure. He was taken for a student. The Polish nationality, in consequence of an odious governmental reaction, had then fallen as low as the Republicans wished to place it high. The strange conflict of the Movement against the Resistance, two words which will be inexplicable in thirty years, made a plaything of that which should have been so respectable,—the name of a vanquished nation to which France offered hospitality, for which fêtes were invented, for which there was singing and dancing by subscription; in short, a nation which, at the period of the struggle between Europe and France, had offered her six thousand men in 1796, and what men! Do not infer from this that it is wished to put the Emperor Nicholas in the wrong as against Poland, or Poland as against the Emperor Nicholas. It would be, in the first place, a sufficiently stupid thing to slip political discussions into a recital which should amuse or interest. Then, Russia and Poland were equally right, the one in desiring the unity of its Empire, the other in wishing to become free again. Let us say, in passing, that Poland could conquer Russia by the influence of its manners and customs, instead of combating her by arms, after the manner of the Chinese, who have ended by Chinesing the

Tartars and who will Chinese the English, it must be hoped. Poland should Polandize Russia: Poniatowski had undertaken it in the least temperate region of the empire; but this gentleman was a king, so much the more uncomprehended that perhaps he did not comprehend himself. How would they not have been hated, those poor people who were the cause of the horrible falsehood, committed during the review, in which all Paris demanded to go to the rescue of Poland. The pretence is made of recognizing the Poles as the allies of the Republican party, without reflecting that Poland was an aristocratic republic. Since that time, the bourgeoisie have overwhelmed with their ignoble contempt the Poles who had been deified a few days before. The wind of a seditious tumult has always made the Parisians veer from north to south, under all régimes. It is very necessary to recall these facings about of the Parisian opinion, in order to explain the fact that the word Pole was, in 1835, a derisory appellation among the people who believe themselves to be the most spiritual and the most polite in the world, in the centre of all illumination, in a city which holds to-day the sceptre of literature and the arts. There exist, alas! two sorts of refugee Poles,—the Republican Pole, son of Lelewel, and the noble Pole, at the head of whose party is placed the Prince Czartoriski. These two sorts of Poles are fire and water; but why quarrel with them? Are these divisions not always to be found among refugees, to whatever nation they belong, no matter

in what countries they have sought refuge? One's country and its hatreds are always carried with one. At Brussels, two French priests, émigrés, manifested a profound horror of each other; and when the reason of this was asked of one of them, he replied, indicating his companion in poverty: "He is a Jansenist." Dante would willingly have poignarded, in his exile, any adversary of the Bianci. In this, may be found the reason of the attacks directed against the venerable Prince Adam Czartoriski by the French radicals, and that of the disfavor extended to a portion of the Polish emigration by the Cæsars of the shops and the Alexanders of the licensed dealers. In 1834, Adam Mitgislas Laginski had therefore against him all the Parisian jests.

"He is acceptable, although a Pole," said Rastignac of him.

"All these Poles pretend to be grand seigneurs," said Maxime de Trailles; "but this one pays his gambling debts; I am beginning to believe that he has had some estates."

Without wishing to offend the banished, it is permissible to make the observation that the lightness, the carelessness, the inconsistency of the Sarmatian character, furnished some grounds for the uncivil speeches of the Parisians, who, moreover, would perfectly resemble the Poles in similar circumstances. The French aristocracy, so admirably aided by the Polish aristocracy during the Revolution, certainly did not receive as well the forced

emigration of 1832. Let us have the mournful courage to say it, the Faubourg Saint-Germain is still in this the debtor of Poland.

Was the Count Adam rich, was he poor, was he an adventurer? This problem long remained unsolved. The diplomatic salons, faithful to their instructions, imitated the silence of the Emperor Nicholas, who considered every Polish emigrant as dead. The Tuileries and the greater number of those who followed its indications gave a horrible proof of that political quality which is decorated with the title of sagacity. A Russian prince, with whom every one smoked cigars during the emigration, was neglected at this time because he appeared to have fallen into disgrace with the Emperor Nicholas. Placed thus between the prudence of the Court and that of diplomacy, the Poles of distinction lived in the Biblical solitude of *Super flumina Babylonis*, or frequented certain salons which served as neutral grounds for all opinions. In a city of pleasures, such as Paris, in which distractions abound at every level, the Polish heedlessness found twice as many reasons as were necessary for it to lead the dissipated life of young men. Finally, let us say it, Adam had against him at first his appearance and his manners. There are two kinds of Poles as there are two kinds of English women. When an English woman is not very handsome, she is horribly ugly, and the Count Adam belongs to the second category. His little countenance, sufficiently sharp in expression, seems to have been pressed in

a vice. His short nose, his blond hair, his reddish moustaches and beard, give him so much more the air of a goat that he is short, thin, and that his eyes of a dirty yellow impress you by that oblique glance so celebrated in Virgil's verses. How is it that, notwithstanding so many unfavorable conditions, he possesses manners and a tone of an exquisite quality? The solution of this problem is found in his dandified appearance and in his education due to his mother, a Radzivill. If his courage reaches the point of temerity, his wit does not pass beyond the current and ephemeral pleasantries of a Parisian conversation; but there is not often to be met with among the young men of the world one who is his superior. The people of the world of to-day talk a great deal too much of horses, revenues, imposts, deputies, to permit the French conversation to remain what it was. Wit requires leisure and certain inequalities of position. The conversation is perhaps better at St. Petersburg and at Vienna than at Paris. Equals have no longer need of refinements, they speak out quite bluntly concerning things, just as they are. The jesters of Paris then had difficulty in recognizing a grand seigneur in a species of light student who, in his discourses, passed carelessly from one subject to another, who ran after amusement with all the more fury that he had just escaped from great perils, and that, having left his country where his family was known, he thought himself at liberty to lead a very irregular life without running the risks of being disesteemed.

One fine day in 1834, Adam bought, in the Rue de la Pépinière, a hôtel. Six months after this acquisition, his establishment equaled that of the richest houses in Paris. At the moment in which Laginski commenced to take himself seriously, he saw Clémentine at the Italiens and fell in love with her. A year afterwards, the marriage took place.

The salon of Madame d'Espard gave the signal for approval. The mothers of families learned too late that, since the year 900, the Laginskis had been counted amongst the most illustrious families of the north. With a very un-Polish prudence, the mother of the young count had, at the moment of the insurrection, mortgaged his estates for an immense sum lent by two Jewish houses and invested in the French funds. The Count Adam Laginski possessed forty-eight thousand francs of income. There was no more astonishment expressed at the imprudence with which, according to many of the salons, Madame de Sérizy, the old diplomat Ronquerolles and the Chevalier du Rouvre had yielded to the crazy passion of their niece. Everbyody passed, as usual, from one extreme to the other. During the winter of 1836, the Count Adam was all the fashion, and Clémentine Laginski became one of the queens of Paris. Madame Laginski is to-day one of that charming group of young women in which shines Mesdames de l'Estorade, De Portenduère, Marie de Vandenesse, Du Guénic and De Maufrigneuse, the flowers of the actual Paris, who live at a great

distance from the parvenus, from the bourgeois and from the makers of new politics.

This preamble was necessary to indicate the sphere in which occurred one of those sublime actions, less rare than the detractors of the present period believe, which are, like beautiful pearls, the fruit of a suffering or a sorrow, and which, like the pearls, are hidden under rough shells, lost in fact at the bottom of that gulf, of that sea, of that wave incessantly agitated which is called the world, the century, Paris, London, or St. Petersburg, as you prefer!

If ever this truth, that architecture is the expression of manners and customs, was demonstrated, has it not been since the insurrection of 1830 under the reign of the House of Orléans. As all fortunes are shrinking in France, the majestic hôtels of our fathers are incessantly being demolished to be replaced by species of phalansteries in which the peer of France of July occupies a third floor above some rich empiric. All styles are employed confusedly. As there no longer exists any court or any nobility to give the style, no unity is to be perceived in the production of this art. On its side, never has architecture discovered more economical methods for imitating the true and the solid, and displayed greater resources, more genius in the planning and arrangements. Offer to an artist the edge of a garden of some decayed old hôtel, he will build you there a little Louvre crushed with ornaments; he will manage there a courtyard, stables, and if you

wish it, a garden; in the interior, he will accumulate so many little apartments and back entrances, he knows so well how to deceive the eye, that there is a great appearance of space; in short, he contrives there such an abundance of lodgings that a ducal family may develop all its evolutions in the former bake-house of the president of a court of justice. The hôtel of the Comtesse Laginski, Rue de la Pépinière, one of these modern creations, is between a court and a garden. At the right in the court is the servants' hall, to which correspond on the left the coach-houses and the stables. The lodge of the concierge rises between two charming porte-cochères. The great luxury of this house consists in the delightful conservatory arranged at the end of a boudoir on the ground floor, in which are displayed admirable reception apartments. A philanthropist driven from England had built this architectural jewel, constructed the conservatory, designed the garden, varnished the doors, bricked the servants' hall, painted the windows green and realized one of those dreams similar, in different proportions, to that of George IV. at Brighton. The fruitful, the industrious, the rapid workman of Paris had carved for him his doors and his windows. The ceilings of the Middle Ages had been imitated or those of the Venetian palaces, and the marble facings of the exterior panels prodigally supplied. Elschoët and Klagmann had executed the panels over the doors and the chimney-pieces. Schinner had painted the ceilings in an imposing manner.

The marvels of the stairway, white as the arm of a woman, rivalled those of the Hôtel Rothschild. Because of the political disturbances, the price of this folly had not exceeded eleven hundred thousand francs. For an Englishman, this was given away. All this luxury, called princely by those who no longer know what a real prince is, had arisen in the former garden of the hôtel of a contractor, a Crœsus of the Revolution, who had died at Brussels in bankruptcy after an overturning at the Bourse. The Englishman had died in Paris of Paris, for, for very many people, Paris is a malady; it is sometimes several maladies. His widow, a Methodist, manifested the greatest horror for the nabob's little house. This philanthropist was a dealer in opium. The chaste widow ordered the sale of the scandalous property at the moment when the political disturbances put in peril the peace, at any price. The Comte Adam profited by this opportunity, you shall know how, for nothing was less like his habits of a grand seigneur.

Behind this house, built in stone carved to a melon-like surface, extends the green velvet of an English lawn, shadowed at the back by a very handsome group of exotic trees, in the midst of which arises a Chinese pavilion with its mute bell-towers and its motionless gilded eggs. The conservatory and its fantastic constructions disguise the enclosing wall on the south. The other wall, which faces the conservatory, is hidden by climbing plants, arranged in imitation of a portico by the aid of

masts painted in green and united by transverse beams. This meadow, this world of flowers, these sanded alleys, this simulacrum of a forest, these aërial palisades, are all developed in a space of twenty-five square perches, which are worth to-day four hundred thousand francs, the value of a real forest. Amid this silence, secured in the midst of Paris, the birds sing,—there are blackbirds, nightingales, bullfinches, linnets and very many sparrows. The greenhouse is an immense jardinière in which the air is charged with perfumes, in which you may walk in winter as if summer was burning with all its fires. The means by which the desired atmosphere is secured, the torrid, that of China or of Italy, are skilfully concealed from view. The tubes in which circulate the boiling water, the steam, whatever the heat may be, are covered with earth and have the appearance of garlands of living flowers. The boudoir is vast. On a restricted site, the miracle of that Parisian fairy, who is called Architecture, is to make everything extensive. The boudoir of the young countess was the coquettish masterpiece of the artist to whom the Comte Adam gave the hôtel to be redecorated. A fault is there impossible,—there are there too many pretty nothings. Love would not know where to pose himself among the crowd of little workboxes carved in China, where the eye perceives thousands of grotesque figures cut out in the ivory, and the production of which has required two Chinese families; cups of burnt topaz mounted on filigree stands;

mosaics which incite to theft; Dutch paintings such as Schinner recreates; angels conceived as Steinbock conceives them, who does not always execute his own; statuettes sculptured by geniuses, pursued by their creditors—veritable explanation of the Arab myths—; the sublime first sketches of our first artists; fronts of coffers for wainscotings and the panels of which alternate with the fantasies of Indian silks; portières which escape in golden waves from under transverse pieces in black oak over which swarms a whole hunting-party; furniture worthy of Madame de Pompadour; a Persian carpet, etc. Finally, as a last adornment, these riches, lit by a half light which filters between two lace curtains, appear still more charming. On a console, among the antiquities, a riding whip, the end of which was carved by Mademoiselle de Fauveau, announced that the countess liked equestrian exercise. Such is a boudoir in 1837, a display of merchandises which distract the looks, as if ennui threatened the society the most stirring and the most moved in the world. Why is there nothing intimate, nothing which induces reverie, calmness? Why? No one is sure of his morrow, and each one enjoys his life as a prodigal usufructuary.

During one morning, Clémentine was assuming the appearance of reflection, extended on one of those marvelous couches from which one cannot rise, so well has the upholsterer who invented them known how to accommodate the curves of idleness and the easefulness of the *far niente*. The open

doors of the conservatory allowed to penetrate into the room the odors of the vegetation and the perfumes of the tropics. The young wife was looking at Adam smoking before her an elegant nargileh, the only manner of smoking which she would have permitted in this apartment. The portières, held back by elegant clasps, opened to the view two magnificent salons, the one white and gold, comparable to that of the Hôtel Forbin-Janson, the other, in the style of the Renaissance. The dining-room, which has no other rival in Paris than that of the Baron de Nucingen, is at the end of a little gallery ceiled and decorated in mediæval style. The gallery is preceded on the side of the court by a grand antechamber from which one may perceive, through the glass doors, the marvels of the stairway.

The count and the countess had just come from déjeuner, the sky was clear blue without the least cloud, the month of April was coming to an end. This household had now enjoyed two years of happiness, and Clémentine had only within the last two days, discovered in her house something which resembled a mystery. The Pole, let us say it still to his glory, is generally weak before a woman; he is so full of tenderness for her, that he becomes inferior to her in Poland; and although the Polish women are admirable, the Pole is still more promptly put to rout by a Parisian woman. Thus the Comte Adam, pressed by questions, did not have the innocent craftiness to sell the secret to his wife. With a woman, it is always necessary to draw some

advantage from a secret; she will be thankful to you for it, as a rogue has a respect for an honest man whom he has not been able to cheat. More of a brave man than a speaker, the count had stipulated only that he should not reply till after having finished his nargileh full of Persian tobacco.

"When we are traveling," she said, "at every difficulty you reply to me with: 'Paz will attend to that!' you wrote only to Paz! On our return here, everybody says to me: 'the captain!' I wish to go out?—'The captain!' Is it a question of settling an account?—'The captain!' Does my horse trot hard, there is a call for the Captain Paz—In short, here it is for me as in the game of dominoes,—there is a Paz everywhere. I only hear Paz spoken of, and I cannot see Paz. What is a Paz? Let them bring me our Paz."

"Everything is not going well, then?" said the count, quitting the *bocchettino* of his nargileh.

"Everything is going so well, that with two hundred thousand francs of income anyone would be ruined to manage as we have with a hundred and ten thousand francs," she said.

She pulled the rich bell-cord executed in point lace, a marvel. A valet de chambre dressed like a minister presented himself immediately.

"Say to Monsieur le Capitaine Paz that I desire to speak to him."

"If you think to learn anything that way!—" said Comte Adam, smiling.

It is not unnecessary to observe that Adam and

Clémentine, married in the month of December, 1835, had traveled, after having passed the winter at Paris, in Italy, in Switzerland and in Germany during the year 1836. Returned in the month of November, the countess had received for the first time during the winter just passed, and she had soon perceived the existence, almost silent and effaced but salutary, of a factotum whose person appeared to be invisible, this Captain Paz—Paç,—whose name is pronounced as it is written.

"Monsieur le Capitaine Paz entreats Madame la Comtesse to excuse him, he is in the stables, and in a costume which does not permit him to come instantly; but once dressed, the Comte Paz will present himself," said the valet de chambre.

"What is he doing, then?"

"He is showing how madame's horse should be taken care of, which Constantin does not groom according to his wishes," replied the valet de chambre.

The countess looked at the servant,—he seemed to be serious and gave no indication of commenting upon his speech by the smile which inferiors permit themselves in speaking of a superior who seems to them to descend to their level.

"Ah! he is grooming Cora."

"Does not Madame la Comtesse ride horseback this morning?" said the valet de chambre, who went away without a reply.

"Is he a Pole?" asked Clémentine of her husband, who inclined his head in sign of affirmation.

Clémentine Laginski remained silent in examining Adam. Her feet almost extended on a cushion, her head in the position of that of a bird, who listens on the edge of his nest to the noises of the grove, she would have seemed ravishing to a blasé man. Blonde and slender, her hair arranged in the English fashion, she resembled at this moment those almost fabulous figures of the "keepsakes," above all in her peignoir in silk of a Persian fashion, the thick folds of which did not disguise so completely the treasures of her body and the fineness of her figure that they could not be admired through these thick veils of flowers and of embroideries. Crossing on the chest, the brilliantly colored stuff allowed the lower part of the neck to appear, the white tones of which contrasted with those of a rich guipure on the shoulders. The eyes, bordered with black lashes, added to the expression of curiosity which contracted a pretty mouth. On the well-modeled forehead might be marked the roundness characteristic of the Parisienne, spontaneous, laughing, instructed, but inaccessible to vulgar seductions. Her hands hung over the end of each arm of her chair, almost transparent. Her long taper fingers, turning up at the tips, displayed nails that were like a species of pink almonds on which the light rested. Adam smiled at the impatience of his wife and looked at her with an eye which conjugal satiety had not yet rendered lukewarm. Already this delicate little countess had known how to render herself mistress in her own house, for she

scarcely responded to the admiration of Adam. In her looks thrown stealthily on him, perhaps there was already the consciousness of the superiority of a Parisienne over this Pole, roguish, thin and reddish.

"There is Paz," said the count, hearing a step which resounded in the gallery.

The countess saw a tall, handsome man enter, well-made, who bore in his countenance traces of that gentleness which comes from strength and from misfortune. Paz had put on hastily one of those tight coats with frogs attached by olives, which were formerly called *polonaises*. Abundant black hair, sufficiently badly combed, surrounded his square head, and Clémentine could see, shining as a block of marble, a large forehead, for Paz held in his hand a cap with a peak. This hand resembled that of the infant Hercules. The most robust health flourished on this visage divided in the middle by a great Roman nose which recalled the handsome Trasteverines to Clémentine. A cravat in black taffeta completed the martial appearance of this mystery of five feet seven inches, with eyes of jet and an Italian splendor. The fulness of the pantaloons in heavy folds which allowed only the ends of the boots to appear betrayed the inclination of Paz for the fashions of Poland. Truly, for a romantic woman, there would have been something burlesque in this very striking contrast between the captain and the count, between this little Pole with his narrow figure and this handsome soldier, between this paladin and this palatine.

"Good-day, Adam," said he familiarly, to the count.

Then he bowed gracefully, asking Clémentine in what he might be able to serve her.

"You are then the friend of Laginski," said the young wife.

"In life, in death!" replied Paz, to whom the young count threw his most affectionate smile with his last cloud of fragrant smoke.

"Well, why do you not eat with us? why have you not accompanied us into Italy and Switzerland? why do you conceal yourself here in such a way as to prevent your receiving the thanks which I owe you for the constant services which you render us?" said the young countess with a sort of vivacity, but without the least emotion.

In fact, she perceived in Paz a sort of voluntary servitude. This idea then could not be entertained without a sort of disesteem for a social amphibian, a being, at once secretary and intendant, neither altogether intendant nor altogether secretary, some poor relative; an embarrassing friend.

"It is, countess," he replied freely enough, "that there are no thanks due me: I am the friend of Adam, and I find my pleasure in taking care of his interests."

"You remain standing for your pleasure also?" said Comte Adam.

Paz sat down in an armchair near the portière.

"I remember having seen you at the time of my marriage, and sometimes in the court," said the

young wife. "But why do you place yourself in a condition of inferiority, you, Adam's friend?"

"The opinion of the Parisians is entirely indifferent to me," said he. "I live for myself, or, if you wish, for you two."

"But the world's opinion of my husband's friend cannot be indifferent to me—"

"Oh! madame, the world is very soon satisfied with this explanation: 'He is an original!'—Do you expect to go out?" he asked, after a moment of silence.

"Will you come to the Bois?" replied the countess.

"Willingly."

With this word Paz bowed and went out.

"What a good fellow! he has the simplicity of a child," said Adam.

"Tell me now your relations with him," demanded Clémentine.

"Paz, my dear soul," said Laginski, "is of a nobility as old and illustrious as our own. At the time of their disasters, one of the Pazzi escaped from Florence to Poland, where he established himself with some fortune, and there founded the Paz family, which acquired the title of count. This family, which distinguished itself in the good days of our royal republic, became rich. The scion of the tree cut down in Italy thrived so vigorously, that there are several branches of the house of the Counts of Paz. It is not then telling you anything extraordinary to say to you that there exist rich Pazes and

poor Pazes. Our Paz is the scion of a poor branch. An orphan, without any other fortune than his sword, he served in the regiment of the Grand Duke Constantine at the time of our Revolution. Carried away by his enthusiasm for the Polish party, he fought like a Pole, like a patriot, like a man who has nothing,—three reasons for fighting well. At the last affair, he thought himself followed by his soldiers and rushed upon a Russian battery, he was taken. I was there. This trait of courage animated me: 'Let us go and get him!' I said to my horsemen. We charged the battery like foragers and I delivered Paz, I, the seventh. We had set out twenty, we came back eight, Paz included. When Warsaw was sold, it was necessary to think of escaping from the Russians. By a singular chance, Paz and I, we found ourselves together at the same hour, in the same place on the other side of the Vistula. I saw this poor captain arrested by the Prussians who had then made themselves the hunting-dogs of the Russians. When a man is fished out from the Styx, he is kept. This new danger of Paz distressed me so much that I allowed myself to be taken with him, with the intention of helping him. Two men can escape where one would perish. Thanks to my name and to some ties of relationship with those upon whom our fate depended, for we were then in the hands of the Prussians, they closed their eyes to my escape. I passed my dear captain off as an unimportant soldier, as a man of my household, and we were able to reach Dantzic. We

there concealed ourselves in a Dutch vessel sailing for London, where two months later we arrived. My mother had fallen sick in England while waiting for me; Paz and I, we took care of her till her death, which the catastrophes of our enterprise hastened. We quitted London, and I brought Paz to France. In such adversities, two men become brothers. When I found myself in Paris, at the age of twenty-two, with sixty and some thousand francs of income, without counting the remains of a sum proceeding from the diamonds and the family paintings sold by my mother, I wished to provide for Paz before delivering myself up to the dissipations of the life of Paris. I had surprised some sadness in the eyes of the captain, sometimes there were in them restrained tears. I have had occasion to appreciate his soul, which is at bottom noble, grand and generous. Perhaps he regretted to perceive himself bound by benefits to a young man six years younger than himself without having been able to discharge his obligations. Light and careless as a boy, I should probably ruin myself at play, allow myself to be inveigled by some Parisienne; Paz and I, we could readily some day become separated. Even while promising faithfully to provide for all his needs, I perceived plenty of chances of my forgetting or being unable to pay his pension. Finally, my dear, I wished to spare him the trouble, the shame, the mortification, of asking money of me or of coming vainly to seek his companion in some day of distress. *Dunqué*, one morning after déjeuner,

with our feet upon the andirons, each smoking his pipe, after having got very red, taken a great many precautions, seeing him look at me with uneasiness, I offered to him a certificate of yearly payment to the bearer of two thousand four hundred francs—"

Clémentine left her place, went and seated herself on Adam's knees, passed her arm around his neck, and kissed him on the forehead, saying to him:

"You dear treasure, how I admire you!—And what did Paz do?"

"Thaddeus," resumed the count, "paled without saying anything—"

"Ah! his name is Thaddeus?"

"Yes. Thaddeus folded up the paper, returned it to me, saying: 'I thought, Adam, that it was between us for life and for death, and that we should never leave each other; you then wish to have no more to do with me?' 'Ah!' said I, 'you understand it that way, Thaddeus? Well, let us speak of it no more. If I am ruined, you will be ruined.' 'You have not,' he said to me, 'enough fortune to live as a Laginski; do you not then need a friend who will occupy himself with your affairs, who will be a father and a brother, a sure confidant?' My dear child, in saying these words to me, Paz had in his look and in his voice a calm which concealed a maternal emotion, but which revealed the gratitude of an Arab, the devotion of a poodle, the friendship of a savage, without display and always ready. My faith, I took him as we take each other, we Poles,

a hand on each shoulder, and I kissed him on the mouth: 'In life, in death then! Everything which I have belongs to you, do as you wish.' It is he who found this hôtel for me for almost nothing. He has sold my *rentes* when they were up, bought them back when they were low, and we have paid for this barrack with the profits. A connoisseur in horses, he deals in them so well that my stables cost very little and I have the finest horses, the most charming equipages in Paris. Our servants, brave Polish soldiers chosen by him, would go through fire for us. I have the appearance of ruining myself, and Paz manages my household with an order and an economy so perfect that he has made up for some inconsiderable losses at play, the stupidities of a young man. My Thaddeus is as shrewd as two Genoese, as eager for gain as a Polish Jew, as foreseeing as a good housekeeper. Never could I persuade him to live as I did when I was a bachelor. Sometimes it required the gentle violence of friendship to drag him to the theatre when I went there alone, or to dinners which I gave in the cabarets to joyous companions. He does not love the life of salons."

"What does he love, then?" asked Clémentine.

"He loves Poland, he weeps for her. His only dissipations have been aid sent, rather in my name than in his, to some of our poor exiles."

"Well, I am going to love him, this brave fellow," said the countess, "he seems to me to have the simplicity of that which is truly great."

"All the beautiful things which you found here,"

resumed Adam, who displayed the most noble confidence in praising his friend, "Paz has unearthed them, he has procured them at auctions or second-hand sales. Oh! he is more of a dealer than the dealers themselves. When you see him rubbing his hands in the court, you may say to yourself that he has bartered a good horse for a better one. He lives for me, his happiness is to see me elegant, in a resplendent equipage. The duties which he imposes on himself he fulfils without noise, without ostentation. One evening I lost twenty thousand francs at whist. 'What will Paz say?' I exclaimed to myself when I returned. Paz handed them to me, not without a sigh; but he did not blame me, even by a look. This sigh had more effect in restraining me than the remonstrances of uncles, of wives or of mothers, would have done in a similar case. 'You regret them?' I said to him. 'Oh! neither for yourself nor myself; no, I only thought that twenty poor Pazes could have lived on that for a year.' You understand that the Pazzi are the equals of the Laginski. Thus I have never wished to see an inferior in my dear Paz. I have endeavored to be as great in my line as he is in his. I have never gone out of my house, nor returned to it, without going to see Paz as I would go to see my father. My fortune is his. In short, Thaddeus is certain that I would throw myself to-day into a danger to get him out of it, as I have twice done."

"That is not saying a little, my dear," said the

countess. "Devotion is a momentary flash. One devotes one's self in war, but one does not in Paris."

"Well," resumed Adam, "for Paz, I am always at war. Our two characters have preserved their asperities and their defects, but the mutual cognizance of our souls has tightened the already close bonds of our friendship. We may save a man's life and kill him afterwards if we find in him an evil companion; but that which renders friendships indissoluble, we have experienced it,—with us, it is that constant exchange of happy impressions on one side and the other, which, perhaps, makes in this respect, friendship richer than love."

A pretty hand closed the count's mouth so promptly that the gesture resembled a blow.

"But yes," said he. "Friendship, my angel, is ignorant of the bankruptcies of sentiment and the failures of pleasure. After having given more than it has, love ends by giving less than it receives."

"On one side, as on the other," said Clémentine smiling.

"Yes," resumed Adam; "whilst friendship can only increase. You have no cause to pout: we are, my angel, as much friends as lovers; we have, at least I hope so, reunited the two sentiments in our happy marriage."

"I am going to explain to you what it is that has rendered you such good friends," said Clémentine. "The difference of your two existences comes from your taste and not from forced choice, from your

fancies and not from your positions. As much as one can judge of a man in having a glimpse of him and from what you have said to me, here the subaltern may become in certain moments the superior."

"Oh! Paz is truly superior to me," replied Adam, naively. "I have no other advantage over him than that which chance has given me."

His wife embraced him for the nobility of this avowal.

"The very great skill with which he conceals the grandeur of his sentiments is an immense superiority," resumed the count. "I have said to him: 'You are a deceiver, you have in your heart vast domains to which you retire.' He has a right to the title of Comte Paz, he causes himself to be called in Paris only captain."

"In short, the Florentine of the Middle Ages has reappeared at the end of three hundred years," said the countess. "There is something of Dante and of Michael Angelo in him."

"You are quite right, he is a poet in his soul," replied Adam.

"Here I am then married to two Poles," said the young countess with a gesture comparable to that which genius finds on the dramatic stage.

"Dear child," said Adam, pressing Clémentine to him, "you would have distressed me much if my friend had not pleased you: we were afraid of it, both of us, although he was delighted with my marriage. You will render him very happy by telling him that you love him—ah! like an old friend."

"I am then going to dress myself, the weather is fine, we will all three go out," said Clémentine, ringing for her femme de chambre.

Paz led such a subterranean life that the whole of fashionable Paris asked itself who it was that accompanied Clémentine Laginski when it saw her going into the Bois de Boulogne and returning between Thaddeus and her husband. Clémentine had exacted, during the ride, that Thaddeus should dine with them. This caprice of an absolute sovereign had forced the captain to make a most unusual toilet. On the return from the Bois, Clémentine arrayed herself with a certain coquetry and in such a manner as to produce an impression upon Adam himself, on entering the salon where the two friends waited for her.

"Comte Paz," said she, "we will go together to the opera."

This was said in that tone which with women signifies, "if you refuse me, we shall quarrel."

"Willingly, madame," replied the captain. "But, as I have not the fortune of a count, call me simply captain."

"Well, captain, give me your arm," she said, taking him and leading him into the dining-room, with a movement full of that impressive familiarity which ravishes lovers.

The countess placed the captain near her, but his attitude was that of a poor sub-lieutenant dining in the house of a rich general. Paz allowed Clémentine to do all the talking, listened to her always with the

air of deference which one has for a superior, contradicted her in nothing, and waited for a formal interrogation before replying. In short, he appeared almost stupid to the countess, whose coquetries failed before this glacial seriousness and this diplomatic respect. In vain, Adam said to him: "Cheer up then, Thaddeus!—One would think that you were not in your own house! You have, doubtless, made a bet to disconcert Clémentine?" Thaddeus remained dull and sleepy. When the masters were left alone at the end of the dessert, the captain explained that his life was arranged in a very different manner from that of fashionable people; he went to bed at eight o'clock and rose very early in the morning; his countenance assumed an expression of great sleepiness.

"My intention in taking you to the opera, captain, was to amuse you; but do as you wish," said Clémentine, a little piqued.

"I will go," replied Thaddeus.

"Duprez is singing *William Tell*," resumed Adam; "but perhaps you would rather go to the Variétés?"

The captain smiled and rang; the valet de chambre appeared.

"Constantin," said he, "can harness the carriage instead of harnessing the coupé. We could not go in it without being crowded," he added, looking at the count.

"A Frenchman would have forgotten that," said Clémentine, smiling.

"Ah! but we are Florentines transplanted in the

North," replied Thaddeus, with a subtlety of accent and with a look which betrayed in his conduct at the table the effect of deliberation.

By an imprudence, readily conceivable, there was too much contrast permitted between the involuntary production of this phrase and the attitude which Paz had assumed during the dinner. Clémentine examined the captain with one of those sly glances which announce, at the same time, surprise and observation in a woman. Thus, during the time in which they all three took their coffee in the salon, there was a silence which was sufficiently vexatious for Adam, who was incapable of divining the cause of it. Clémentine no longer strove to make Thaddeus speak. On his side, the captain resumed his military stiffness and abandoned it no more, neither in the carriage nor in the box where he pretended to sleep.

"You see, madame, that I am a very wearisome personage," he said in the last act of *William Tell*, during the ballet, "was I not right to remain, as they say, in my specialty?"

"My faith, my dear captain, you are neither a charlatan nor a talker, you are very little of a Pole."

"Let me, then," he resumed, "watch over your pleasures, your fortune and your house, I am only good for that."

"Tartufe—go!" said Comte Adam, smiling. "My dear, he is full of heart, he is educated; he could if he wished, make himself acceptable in any salon. Clémentine, do not take his modesty too literally."

"Adieu, countess; I have proved myself obliging, I will make use of your carriage to get to my bed all the sooner and I will send it back to you."

Clémentine made an inclination of her head and allowed him to depart without any reply.

"What a bear!" she said to the count. "You are much more agreeable, you are!"

Adam grasped the hand of his wife without any one seeing it.

"Poor dear Thaddeus, he has endeavored to make himself a foil for me where most men would have tried to surpass me."

"Oh," she said, "I am not sure that there is not a little calculation in his conduct: he would have puzzled an ordinary woman."

Half an hour later, when Boleslas, the footman, cried: "Open the door," when the coachman, his horses' heads turned toward the entrance, waited for the two portals to be thrown open, Clémentine said to the count:

"Where does the captain roost?"

"Why, there," replied Adam, indicating a little attic floor which rose handsomely on each side of the porte-cochère and a window of which opened on the street. "His apartment extends over the carriage-houses."

"And who occupies the other side?"

"No one as yet," replied Adam. "The other little apartment situated above the stables, will be for our children and their teacher."

"He has not yet gone to bed," said the countess,

perceiving a light in Thaddeus's room, when the carriage was under the portico, the columns of which were copied from those of the Tuileries and which replaced the vulgar zinc awning painted like bed-ticking.

The captain, in a dressing-gown, a pipe in his hand, was looking at Clémentine entering the vestibule. The day had been trying for him. For this reason. Thaddeus had experienced a terrible movement of the heart the day on which, taken by Adam to the Italiens to judge her, he had seen Mademoiselle du Rouvre; for the first time then, when he saw her again at the Mayor's office and at the church of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, he recognized in her that woman whom every man might love exclusively, for Don Juan himself preferred one in the *mille e tre!* Thus Paz himself strongly advised taking the classic voyage after the marriage. However peaceful he may have been during the period of Clémentine's absence, his sufferings had recommenced since the return of this pretty household. Therefore, this is what he was thinking, while smoking his latakia in his cherry-wood pipe, six feet long, a present from Adam:

"I only and God, who will reward me for having suffered in silence, can know how much I love her! But how to have neither her love nor her hatred?"

And he fell to meditating to indefinite lengths upon this theory of loving strategy. It is not necessary to believe that Thaddeus lived entirely without pleasure in the midst of his sorrows. The

sublime deceits of this day were sources of interior joy. Since the return of Clémentine and Adam, he experienced from day to day ineffable satisfaction in finding himself necessary to this household which, without his devotion, would certainly have gone to its ruin. What fortune would resist the prodigalities of Parisian life! Brought up in the house of a father who dissipated everything, Clémentine knew nothing of the management of a household, which to-day the richest, the most noble women are obliged to superintend themselves. Who is it that can have an intendant nowadays? Adam on his side, son of one of those great Polish seigneurs, who allowed themselves to be devoured by the Jews, incapable of administering the remnants of one of the immense fortunes in Poland,—where there are immense ones,—was not of a character to bridle his own fancies nor those of his wife. If left to himself, he would have ruined himself, perhaps, before his marriage. Paz had prevented him from gambling on the Bourse, is not that already to have said everything? Thus, in knowing that he loved Clémentine in spite of himself, Paz had not the resource of quitting the house and setting out on his travels to forget his passion. Gratitude, that answer to the enigma which his life presented, nailed him to this hôtel where he alone could be the man of affairs of this heedless family. The travels of Adam and Clémentine made him hope for some peace; but the countess, returned more beautiful than ever, enjoying that liberty of spirit which

marriage offers to the Parisiennes, displayed all the graces of a young woman and that indescribable attraction which comes from the happiness or from the independence which is given her by a young man as confiding, as truly chivalrous, as loving, as Adam. To have the certainty of being the mainstay of the splendor of this household, to see Clémentine descending from her carriage when returning from a fête or departing in the morning for the Bois, to meet her on the boulevards in her pretty carriage, like a flower in its cup of leaves, inspired in the poor Thaddeus full and mysterious delights which expanded in the bottom of his heart, without the slightest trace ever appearing on his countenance. How, during the last five months, had the countess managed to see anything of the captain? He hid himself from her, carefully concealing the care which he took to avoid her. Nothing resembles more the divine love than love without hope. Must not a man have a certain profundity in his heart to devote himself in silence and in obscurity? This profundity, in which is concealed the pride of a father and of God, contains the worship of love for love, as power for power was the motto of the life of the Jesuits, an avarice sublime in that it is constantly generous and modeled, in short, on the mysterious existence of the principles of the world. The *Effect*, is not that Nature? and Nature is an enchantress, she belongs to the man, to the poet, to the painter, to the lover; but the *Cause*, is it not, in the eyes of some privileged souls and for certain

very great thinkers, superior to Nature? The Cause, it is God. In this sphere of the causes live the Newtons, the Laplaces, the Keplers, the Descartes, the Malebranches, the Spinosas, the Buffons, the true poets and the solitaries of the second Christian age, the St. Theresas of Spain and the sublime ecstatics. Each human sentiment contains in it analogies to that situation in which the mind abandons the Effect for the Cause, and Thaddeus had attained to this height in which everything changes its aspect. Given up to the unspeakable joys of creating, Thaddeus was, in love, all that we know of the greatest in the pomps of genius.

"No, she is not entirely deceived," he said to himself, watching the smoke of his pipe. "She could hopelessly involve me with Adam if she should find fault with me; and, if she should coquette with me to torment me, what would become of me?"

The fatuousness of this last supposition was so contrary to the modest character and the sort of German timidity of the captain, that he reproached himself for having entertained it, and went to bed resolved to await events before deciding upon any line of conduct. The next day, Clémentine breakfasted very well without Thaddeus, and without perceiving his want of obedience. This next day happened to be her day of reception, which, with her, was an affair of royal splendor. She did not pay any attention to the absence of the captain, upon whom devolved all the details of these days of pomp.

"Good!" said Paz to himself, hearing the carriages roll away about two o'clock in the morning, "the countess has had only a Parisian whim or curiosity."

The captain then resumed his ordinary way of life, which had been for a moment disarranged by this incident. Turned aside by the many occupations of Parisian life, Clémentine appeared to have forgotten Paz. Does anyone think, in fact, that it is such a small thing to reign over this inconstant Paris? Would anyone believe, perchance, that in this supreme play one risks only his fortune? The winters are for the fashionable women that which formerly a campaign was for the military men of the Empire. What a work of art and of genius is a toilet or a coiffure destined to make a sensation! A frail and delicate woman wears her hard and brilliant harness of flowers and of diamonds, of silk and of steel, from nine o'clock in the evening until two and often three o'clock in the morning. She eats little, in order to attract attention to her slender figure; the hunger which seizes her during the evening she assuages by cups of debilitating tea, sugared cakes, heating ices or heavy slices of pastry. The stomach must yield to the demands of coquetry. The hour of rising is very late in the morning. Everything is then in contradiction to the laws of nature, and nature is pitiless. No sooner has she risen, than a fashionable woman recommences her morning toilet, begins to think of her afternoon toilet. Has she not to receive, to pay visits, to go

to the Bois on horseback or in a carriage? Is it not always necessary to rehearse all the business of smiles, to exercise the wit in originating compliments which shall appear neither common nor far-fetched? And all women do not succeed in it. Are you surprised, then, on seeing a young woman whom the world has received fresh and smiling, to find her again three years later faded and passée! Six months' sojourn in the country hardly serves to repair the wounds made by the winter. Nothing is heard of to-day but gastritis, strange diseases, formerly unknown to women occupied with the care of their households. Formerly, the woman showed herself sometimes; to-day, she is always on the scene. Clémentine had to struggle;—she was beginning to be quoted, and in the cares exacted by this battle between her and her rivals, scarcely was there place for the love of her husband. Thaddeus might well be forgotten. Nevertheless, a month later, in the month of May, some days before setting out for the estate of Ronquerolles, in Burgundy, on her return from the Bois, she perceived in the side alley of the Champs-Élysées, Thaddeus, carefully dressed, in delight at seeing his countess so beautiful in her carriage, the mettlesome horses, the glittering liveries, in short, his dear and admired establishment.

"There is the captain," she said to her husband.

"How happy he is!" replied Adam. "These are his fêtes: there is no finer turnout than ours, and he enjoys seeing all the world envying our happiness.

Ah! you notice him now for the first time, but he is there almost every day."

"Of what can he be thinking?" said Clémentine.

"He is thinking at this moment that the winter has been very expensive and that we are going to live somewhat more economically with your old uncle Ronquerolles," replied Adam.

The countess ordered the carriage to stop before Paz and made him take a seat beside her. Thaddeus became as red as a cherry.

"I shall infect you," he said, "I have been smoking cigars."

"Does not Adam infect me?" she replied, quickly.

"Yes, but it is Adam," replied the captain.

"And why should not Thaddeus have the same privileges?" said the countess, smiling.

This divine smile had a power which triumphed over the heroic resolutions of Paz; he looked at Clémentine with all the fire of his soul in his eyes, but tempered by the angelic testimony of his gratitude, in him, a man who lived only by this sentiment. The countess crossed her arms in her shawl, reclined thoughtfully on the cushions, brushing them with the feathers of her pretty hat, and turned her eyes on the passers-by. This revelation of a soul great, and till this moment resigned, touched her sensitiveness. What was, after all, the merit of Adam in her eyes? Was it not natural to have courage and generosity? But the captain!—Thaddeus possessed more than Adam or appeared to possess an immense superiority. What sinister thoughts took possession of the

countess when she again observed the contrast between that fine nature, so complete, which distinguished Thaddeus and that slender nature which, in Adam, indicated the forced degeneracy of the aristocratic families, senseless enough to forever restrict themselves to alliances among themselves? These thoughts, the devil alone knew them; for the young woman remained without speaking, her eyes thoughtful but vague, until they reached the hôtel.

"You will dine with us; otherwise I shall be vexed that you have disobeyed me," said she, on entering. "You are Thaddeus for me as for Adam. I know the obligations which you are under to him, but I know also all those which we are under to you. In return for two generous impulses, which are so natural, you are generous at every hour and every day. My father is coming to dine with us, as well as my uncle Ronquerolles and my aunt De Sérizy; go and dress yourself," said she, taking the hand which he offered her to assist her to descend from the carriage.

Thaddeus mounted to his rooms to dress, his heart at once happy and constricted by a horrible trembling. He descended at the last moment and played again during the dinner his part of a military man, good only to fulfil the functions of an intendant. But this time, Clémentine was not the dupe of Paz, whose look had enlightened her. Ronquerolles, the most skilful ambassador after the Prince de Talleyrand and who served De Marsay so well during his short ministry, was informed by his niece of the

high value of the Comte Paz, who executed so modestly the duties of intendant for his friend Mitgislas.

"And how is it that this is the first time that I see the Comte Paz?" said the Marquis de Ronquerolles.

"Ah! he is sly and mysterious," replied Clémentine, giving Paz a look to tell him to change his manner.

Alas! it is necessary to admit it at the risk of making the captain less interesting, Paz, although superior to his friend Adam, was not a strong man. His apparent superiority was owing to his misfortunes. In his days of poverty and of isolation at Warsaw, he read, he instructed himself, he compared and meditated; but the gift of creation, which makes the great man, he did not in the least possess, and perhaps he would never acquire it. Paz, great only by the heart, approached in this the sublime; but in the sphere of sentiments, more a man of action than of thoughts, he kept his thoughts to himself. They then served him only to devour his heart. And what, moreover, is an unexpressed thought? At Clémentine's speech, the Marquis de Ronquerolles and his sister exchanged a singular look indicating their niece, Comte Adam and Paz. It was one of those rapid scenes which can take place only in Italy or in Paris. Only in these two localities in the world, with the exception of all the courts, can the eyes express many things. To communicate to the eye all the power of the soul, to

give it the value of a discourse, to express in it a poem or a drama with one stroke, there is required either excessive servitude or excessive liberty. Adam, the Marquis du Rouvre and the countess did not in the least perceive this luminous observation of an old coquette and an old diplomat; but Paz, this faithful dog, comprehended the prophecies. This was, it will be noticed, the affair of two seconds. To endeavor to paint the storm which ravaged the captain's soul, would be to be too diffuse for the present day.

"What! already the aunt and the uncle believe that I can be loved?" he said within himself. "At present, my happiness depends only on my audacity!—And Adam?—"

Ideal love and desire, both of them as powerful as gratitude and friendship, came into collision, and love triumphed for a moment. This poor admirable lover wished to have his little day! Paz became clever and intelligent, he wished to please, and gave a history of the Polish Insurrection comprehensively, in response to an explanation asked for by the diplomat. By the time the dessert was reached, Paz then saw Clémentine hanging on his words, taking him for a hero, and forgetting that Adam, after having sacrificed a third of his immense fortune, had faced the chances of exile. At nine o'clock, after the coffee, Madame de Sérizy kissed her niece on the forehead, clasping her hand, and taking away authoritatively, Comte Adam, leaving the Marquises du Rouvre and de Ronquerolles, who,

ten minutes later, went away also. Paz and Clémentine remained alone.

"I will leave you, madame," said Thaddeus, "for you will rejoin them at the Opéra."

"No," she replied, "the dancing does not please me; and they are giving this evening a detestable ballet, *La Revolte au Sérail.*"

A moment of silence followed.

"Two years ago, Adam would not have gone without me," she resumed without looking at Paz.

"He loves you to distraction—," replied Thaddeus.

"And it is because he loves me to distraction that perhaps he will not love me any more to-morrow," cried the countess.

"The Parisian women are inexplicable," said Thaddeus. "When they are loved *to distraction*, they wish to be loved *reasonably;* and when one loves them *reasonably*, they reproach one with not knowing how to love at all."

"And they are always right, Thaddeus," she replied, smiling. "I know Adam well, I do not wish to complain of him: he is light and above all a grand seigneur, he will be always content to have me for his wife and never deny me in any of my tastes; but—"

"Where is the marriage in which there are not some *buts?*" said Thaddeus very softly, in endeavoring to give another turn to the thoughts of the countess.

The man with the least advantages would have

had perhaps this thought, which all but drove this lover wild:

"If I do not say to her that I love her, I am an imbecile!" said the captain to himself.

There ensued between these two beings one of those terrible silences which burst with thoughts. The countess examined Paz surreptitiously, at the same time that Paz contemplated her in the mirror. In ensconcing himself in her sofa like a well-fed man who digests his dinner, the true attitude of a husband or of an indifferent old man, Paz crossed his hands on his stomach, revolved his thumbs rapidly and mechanically, and looked at them stupidly.

"But tell me some good of Adam!" cried Clémentine. "Tell me that he is not a frivolous man, you who know him!"

This cry was sublime.

"Here is a moment in which to set up between us insurmountable barriers," thought the poor Paz, conceiving a heroic falsehood.—"Some good?—" he resumed aloud. "I love him too much, you would not believe me. I am incapable of speaking evil of him to you. Thus—my rôle, madame, is very difficult between you two."

Clémentine lowered her head and looked at the tips of the varnished shoes of Paz.

"You people of the North, you have only physical courage, you lack constancy in your decisions," she murmured.

"What are you going to do alone, madame?" replied Paz, assuming a perfect air of ingenuousness.

"You will then not keep me company?"

"Forgive me for leaving you—"

"How! Where do you go?"

"I am going to the circus, it opens at the Champs-Élysées this evening, and I cannot fail to be there—"

"And why?" said Clémentine, interrogating him with a half-angry look.

"Is it necessary to open to you my heart?" replied he, reddening, "to confide to you that which I hide from my dear Adam, who believes that I love only Poland?"

"Ah! a secret in our noble captain?"

"An infamy which you will comprehend and for which you will console me."

"You, infamous?—"

"Yes, I, Comte Paz, I am madly in love with a girl who travels around France with the Bouthor family, those people who have a circus like that of Franconi, but who show only at the country fairs! I have procured her an engagement by the director of the Cirque-Olympique."

"She is beautiful?" said the countess.

"For me," he replied in a melancholy manner. "Malaga, that is her *nom de guerre*, is strong, agile and supple. Why do I prefer her *to all the other women of the world?*—To tell the truth, I don't know. When I see her, her black hair confined by a band of blue satin flowing over her naked, olive-colored shoulders, dressed in a white tunic with a golden border and silk fleshings which make of her a living Greek statue, her feet in worn satin slippers, with

flags in her hands, moving to the sounds of military music, throwing herself through an immense hoop, the paper of which is torn open in mid-air, when the horse is at full gallop, and she lights gracefully on his back again, applauded, without any *claque,* by a whole crowd—well, that moves me!"

"More than a beautiful woman at a ball?"—said Clémentine, with a provoking surprise.

"Yes," replied Paz, in a choked voice. "This admirable agility, this constant grace in a constant peril, seems to me the finest triumph of a woman.—Yes, madame, the Cinti and the Malibran, the Grisi and the Taglioni, the Pasta and the Elssler, all those who reign or who have reigned on the boards, do not seem to me worthy to untie the buskins of Malaga, who can descend and mount again on a horse at a wild gallop, who slips under him from the left to remount on the right, who leaps like a white will-o'-the-wisp around the most fiery animal, who can maintain herself on the toe of only one foot and then fall astride the back of the horse with her feet hanging, still at a gallop, and who, finally, standing on the back of the courser without a bridle, knits stockings, breaks eggs and fricassees an omelet to the profound admiration of the people, of the true people, the peasants and the soldiers! At the open-air exhibitions, this charming Columbine formerly carried chairs on the end of her nose, the prettiest Greek nose that I ever saw. Malaga, madame, is dexterity in person. Of herculean strength, she

requires only her delicate fist or her little foot to dispose of three or four men. She is, in short, the goddess of gymnastics."

"She must be stupid—"

"Oh!" resumed Paz, "amusing as the heroine of *Peveril of the Peak!* Careless as a Bohemian, she says everything that passes through her head; she is concerned about the future as much as you would be concerned for the sous which you throw to a beggar, and she says really sublime things. Never could it be proved to her that an old diplomat is a fine young man, and a million would not make her change her opinion. Her love is for a man a perpetual flattery. Her health is truly insolent, her teeth are thirty-two pearls of a delicious lustre and set in coral. Her muzzle—as she calls the lower part of her face—has, according to Shakespeare's expression, the freshness, the savor of a heifer's nose. And that gives you cruel vexations! She considers fine men the strong men, the Adolphes, the Augusts, the Alexanders, the jugglers and the clowns. Her instructor, a frightful Cassander, overwhelmed her with blows, and it required thousands of them to give her her suppleness, her gracefulness, her intrepidity."

"You are intoxicated with Malaga!" said the countess.

"She is only called Malaga on the posters," said Paz, with a vexed air. "She lives in the Rue Saint-Lazare, in a little apartment on the third floor, in the midst of velvet and silk, and lives there

like a princess. She has two existences, her life at the circus and her life of a pretty woman."

"And she loves you?"

"She loves me—you are going to laugh—only because I am a Pole! She sees all the Poles after the fashion of the engraving of Poniatowski leaping into the Elster, for, for all French people, the Elster, in which it is impossible to drown yourself, is an impetuous flood which swallowed up Poniatowski.—In the midst of all this, I am very unhappy, madame—"

A tear of rage which came into the eyes of Thaddeus affected Clémentine.

"You love the extraordinary, you men!"

"And you then?" said Thaddeus.

"I know Adam so well, that I am sure that he would forget me for some trick-performer like your Malaga. But where did you see her?"

"At Saint-Cloud in the month of September last, the day of the fête. She was on the corner of the scaffolding covered with canvas on which the troop were displaying themselves. Her comrades, all in Polish costumes, were making a frightful racket. I saw her mute and silent, and I thought I could divine that she had melancholy thoughts. Was not there cause in a young girl of twenty? This is what touched me."

The countess was in a delicious pose, thoughtful, almost sorrowful.

"Poor, poor Thaddeus," she said.

And, with the good fellowship of a veritable great lady, she added, not without a subtle smile:

"Go, go to your circus!"

Thaddeus took her hand, kissed it, leaving on it a scalding tear, and went out. After having invented his passion for a bareback rider, it was necessary for him to give it some reality. In his history the only bit of truth was the moment of attention obtained by the illustrious Malaga, the female rider of the Bouthor family at Saint-Cloud, and whose name had happened to attract his attention in the morning on the circus poster. The clown, bought over by a hundred-sou piece, had said to Paz that the female rider was a foundling, perhaps a stolen infant.

Thaddeus then went to the circus and saw again the beautiful rider. For the sum of ten francs, a groom, who there took the place of the female attendants of the theatres, informed him that Malaga's name was Marguerite Turquet, and that she lived in the Rue des Fossés-du-Temple, on the fifth floor.

The next day, with death in his soul, Paz found his way to the Faubourg du Temple and asked for Mademoiselle Turquet, during the summer the understudy of the most illustrious female rider of the circus, and supernumerary at a theatre of the boulevard during the winter.

"Malaga!" cried the portress, precipitating herself into the mansard, "a fine gentleman for you! He is asking for information from Chapuzot, who is dawdling with him so as to give me the time to notify you."

"Thanks, Mame Chapuzot; but what will he think on seeing me ironing my dress?"

"Ah bah! when one is in love, one loves everything belonging to its object."

"Is he an Englishman? They love horses."

"No, he seems to me to be a Spaniard."

"So much the worse! it is said that the Spaniards are a poor lot.—Stay here with me, Mame Chapuzot, then I shall not seem like a forsaken one."

"What do you ask, monsieur?" said the portress to Thaddeus opening the door.

"Mademoiselle Turquet."

"My daughter," replied the portress, arranging her dress, "here is someone who asks for you."

A line on which some linen was drying knocked off the captain's hat.

"What do you wish, monsieur?" said Malaga, picking up Paz's hat.

"I have seen you at the circus, you recalled to me a daughter whom I have lost, mademoiselle; and in memory of my Héloïse, whom you resemble in a striking manner, I would wish to be of service to you, always provided that you will permit me."

"Why then! but pray take a seat, general," said Madame Chapuzot. "No one can be more honest—nor more gallant."

"I am not a gallant, my dear lady," said Thaddeus; "I am a despairing father who wishes to deceive himself by a resemblance."

"Thus I shall pass for your daughter?" said

Malaga, very slyly and without a suspicion of the profound truthfulness of this proposition.

"Yes," said Paz; "I will come to see you sometimes, and that the illusion may be complete, I will place you in a handsome apartment, richly furnished—"

"I shall have my furniture!" said Malaga, looking at the Chapuzot.

"And servants," resumed Paz, "and all your comforts."

Malaga looked at the stranger askance.

"Of what country is monsieur?"

"I am Polish."

"I accept then," said she.

Paz went out, promising to return.

"There is a queer one!" said Marguerite Turquet, looking at Madame Chapuzot. "But I am afraid that this man will try to wheedle me to carry out some whim. Bah! I will risk it."

A month after this grotesque interview, the beautiful circus-rider inhabited an apartment deliciously furnished by the upholsterer of Comte Adam, for Paz wished his folly to be talked about in the hôtel Laginski. Malaga, for whom this adventure was a dream of the *Thousand and One Nights*, was served by the Chapuzot household, at once her confidants and her domestics. The Chapuzots and Marguerite Turquet waited for some kind of a denouement; but after three months, neither Malaga nor the Chapuzot knew how to explain the caprice of the Polish count. Paz came to pass

nearly an hour a week, during which he remained in the salon without ever wishing to go either into the boudoir of Malaga or into her chamber, which he never entered, notwithstanding the most skilful manœuvres on the part of the circus-rider and of the Chapuzots. The count inquired concerning the little events which checkered the life of the performer, and each time he left two forty-franc pieces on the mantel-shelf.

"He seems to be very much bored," said Madame Chapuzot.

"Yes," replied Malaga, "that man is as cold as frost—"

"But he is a good fellow all the same," cried Chapuzot, happy to see himself arrayed all in blue broadcloth and looking like some porter at the bureau of a minister.

By his periodical offering, Paz provided for Marguerite Turquet an income of three hundred and twenty francs a month. This sum, joined to her meager pay at the circus, provided her with an existence splendid in comparison with her past poverty. There were strange stories current at the circus among the artists concerning the good fortune of Malaga. The vanity of the rider permitted the increase to sixty thousand francs of the six thousand francs which her apartment cost the prudent captain. According to the clowns and the supernumeraries, Malaga ate from silver plates. She came to the circus, moreover, in charming burnous, cashmeres, delightful scarfs. In short, the Pole was the

best-natured soul that a circus-rider could ever encounter,—not in the least intermeddling, not in the least jealous, leaving to Malaga her entire liberty.

"There are some women who are very fortunate!" said Malaga's rival. "Such things never happen to me, who stand for a third of the receipts."

Malaga wore pretty, small hats, sometimes *gave herself airs*—an admirable expression of the girls' dictionary—in a carriage in the Bois de Boulogne, where the elegant youth commenced to take notice of her. Finally, Malaga began to be talked about in the contraband world of equivocal women, and her happiness was attacked by calumnies. She was said to be a sleep-walker, and the Pole passed for a magnetizer who was seeking the philosopher's stone. Some suppositions more envenomed than this, rendered Malaga more curious than Psyche; she repeated them, all weeping, to Paz.

"When I quarrel with a woman," she said in conclusion, "I do not insult her, I do not pretend that she is *magnetized* in order to find stones; I say that she is a hunchback, and I prove it. Why do you compromise me?"

Paz maintained the most cruel silence. The female Chapuzot ended by discovering the name and the title of Thaddeus; then at the Laginski mansion, she learned positive things,—Paz was a bachelor, no dead daughter of his had ever been known either in Poland or in France. Malaga could no longer defend herself against a feeling of terror.

"My child," said the Chapuzot, "that monster there—"

A man who contented himself with looking in a silent manner—askance,—without daring to express himself on anything, without having any confidence, —and a beautiful creature like Malaga: in the ideas of the Chapuzot, such a man must be a monster.

"That monster there is preparing you to bring you to something illegal or criminal. *Dieu de Dieu!* if you should go to the Court of Assizes, or, what makes me shiver from the head to the feet, so that I tremble only in speaking about it, to the Correctional Tribunal, if you should be put in the newspapers.—I, do you know what I would do if I were in your place? Well, in your place, I would notify, for my safety, the police."

One day, when the wildest ideas were fermenting in Malaga's mind, when Paz put his pieces of gold on the velvet of the mantel-piece, she took the gold and threw it into his face, saying to him:

"I do not want any stolen money."

The captain gave the gold to the Chapuzots and returned no more. Clémentine was then passing the summer season on the estates of her uncle, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, in Burgundy. When the circus troupe no longer saw Thaddeus in his place, a rumor spread among the artists. Malaga's grandeur of soul was considered as stupidity by some, as cleverness by others. The conduct of the Pole, when related to the most knowing women, seemed quite inexplicable. Thaddeus received in

one week alone thirty-seven letters from ladies of light manners. Fortunately for him, his surprising reserve awakened no curiosities in the fine world and remained the object of discussion only in the contraband world.

Two months later, the beautiful rider, riddled with debts, wrote to Comte Paz this letter, which the dandies have considered since that time as a masterpiece:

"You, whom I still dare to call my friend, will you have pity on me after what has passed and which you have so misinterpreted? My heart disavows everything which can have wounded you. If I have been happy enough to enable you to find some charm in my company as you did, return—otherwise I shall fall into despair. Poverty has already come, and you do not know all that it brings of *stupid things*. Yesterday, I lived on a two-sou herring and a sou's worth of bread. Is that a breakfast for your loving one? I have no longer the Chapuzots who appeared to be so devoted to me! Your absence has had for its effect making me see the end of all human attachments.—A dog which we have taken care of will not leave us, and the Chapuzots have gone off. A sheriff's officer, who was deaf to all remonstrances, has seized everything in the name of the proprietor, who has no heart, and of the jeweler, who would not wait even ten days; for, your confidence lost, you men, credit goes too! What a situation for women who have only joy with which to reproach themselves! My friend, I have carried *to my aunt* everything which has any value; I have no longer anything but the memory of you, and here is the dull season at hand. During the winter I am without fire, since they only play pantomimes on the boulevard, in which I have almost nothing to do but little parts which do not give a woman any chance. How have you been able to misunderstand the

nobility of my sentiments toward you, for, in fact, have we not two ways of expressing our gratitude? You who appeared so happy at my comfort, how could you leave me in distress? Oh! my sole friend on earth, before beginning to make the round of the fairs again with the Bouthor Circus, for I shall earn at least my living that way, forgive me for having wished to know if I have lost you forever. If I should happen to think of you at the moment when I am performing in the ring, it is possible that I might break my legs in missing a *time!* Whatever may happen, you have for yours for life,

"MARGUERITE TURQUET."

"This letter," said Thaddeus to himself with a laugh, "is worth my ten thousand francs!"

Clémentine arrived the next day, and the day after, Paz saw her again, more beautiful, more graceful than ever. After the dinner, during which the countess had worn an air of perfect indifference toward Thaddeus, there took place in the salon, after the captain's departure, a little scene between the count and his wife. In having the air of asking advice from Adam, Thaddeus had left with him, as inadvertently, Malaga's letter.

"Poor Thaddeus!" said Adam to his wife, after having seen Paz take his departure. "What a misfortune for a man so distinguished to become the plaything of a circus-performer of the lowest kind! He will lose everything in it, he will debase himself, he will no longer be recognizable in a little while. See my dear, read," said the count, offering Malaga's letter to his wife.

Clémentine read the letter, which smelled of

tobacco, and threw it from her with a gesture of disgust.

"However thick may be the bandage which he has on his eyes, he will without doubt be able to see something," said Adam. "Malaga will have played him some dirty tricks."

"And he will return to her!" said Clémentine, "and he will forgive her. It is only for these horrible women that you have indulgence!"

"They have so much need of it," said Adam.

"Thaddeus did justice to himself—in keeping to himself," she resumed.

"Oh! my angel, you go too far," said the count, who, enchanted at first to lower his friend in his wife's eyes, did not wish the death of the sinner.

Thaddeus, who knew Adam very well, had demanded the most profound secrecy,—he had spoken to him, as it would appear, only to ask him to forgive his dissipations and to ask his friend to permit him to take a thousand écus for Malaga.

"He is a man who has a proud character," resumed Adam.

"How so?"

"Why, to have expended not more than ten thousand francs for her, and to make her come forward with such a letter before giving her the means to pay her debts! For a Pole, my faith!—"

"But he can ruin you," said Clémentine, with the sharp tone of a Parisian woman when she expresses her cat-like suspicion.

"Oh! I know him," replied Adam, "he will sacrifice Malaga to us."

"We shall see," replied the countess.

"If it were necessary for his happiness, I should not hesitate to ask him to leave her. Constantin has told me that, during the time of their liaison, Paz, up to that time so sober, had returned several times very giddy.—If he should allow himself to get into the way of drunkenness, I should be as much grieved as if it were my own child."

"Do not say anything more to me about it," cried the countess, making another gesture of disgust.

Two days later, the captain perceived in the manners, in the sound of the voice, in the eyes of the countess, the terrible effects of Adam's indiscretion. Contempt had hollowed its abysses between this charming woman and himself. Thus he now fell into a profound melancholy, devoured by this thought:

"You have rendered yourself unworthy of her."

Life became heavy to him, the most beautiful sunlight was gray in his eyes. Nevertheless, under these floods of bitter sorrow, he found moments of joy: he could then yield himself without danger to his admiration for the countess, who no longer paid the slightest attention to him when, in her entertainments, hidden in a corner, silent, but all eyes and all heart, he did not lose one of her attitudes, not one of her songs when she sang. He lived, in short, in this beautiful life,—he could groom, himself, the horse which *she* was going to ride, devote

himself to the internal economy of this splendid house, for whose interests he redoubled his devotion. These silent pleasures were buried in his heart like those of the mother whose infant will never know anything of the heart of its mother, for is it to know it while ignorant of something therein? Was it not finer than the chaste amour of Petrarch for Laura, which was definitely remunerated by a treasure of glory and by the triumph of the poetry which it had inspired? The sensation which D'Assas experienced in dying, is it not a whole life? This sensation, Paz experienced every day without dying, but also without the repayment of immortality. What is there then in love, that, notwithstanding these secret delights, Paz was devoured with chagrin? The Catholic religion has so greatly enlarged love, that it has married to it, so to speak, indissolubly, esteem and nobility. Love does not exist without the superior qualities of which men are proud, and it is so rare to be loved when one is scorned, that Thaddeus was perishing of the wounds which he had voluntarily given himself. To hear it said that she would have loved him, and to die! the poor lover would have found his life abundantly rewarded. The anguishes of his previous situation seemed to him preferable to living near her, enveloping her with his generosities without being appreciated, comprehended. In short, he wished the reward for his virtue! He grew thinner and yellower; he fell so really sick, devoured by a low fever, that during the month of January he was obliged to remain in

bed, without being willing to consult a physician. Comte Adam was filled with lively anxieties for his poor Thaddeus. The countess then had the cruelty to say, when they were almost alone:

"Leave him alone; do you not see that he has some *Olympic* remorse!"

This word restored to Thaddeus the courage of despair, he rose, went out, sought some distractions and recovered his health.

In the month of February, Adam lost a sufficiently considerable sum of money at the Jockey Club, and as he feared his wife, he came to ask Thaddeus to put this sum under the head of his dissipations with Malaga.

"What is there extraordinary in that this circus-rider has cost you twenty thousand francs? That only concerns me,—whereas, if the countess knew that I had lost them at play, I should be lowered in her esteem; she would have fears for the future."

"This too, then!" exclaimed Thaddeus, breathing a profound sigh.

"Ah! Thaddeus, this service would balance our accounts, were I not already your debtor."

"Adam, you will have children, do not play any more," said the captain.

"Malaga costs us twenty thousand francs more!" cried the countess, some days later, on learning the generosity of Adam toward Paz. "Ten thousand before, in all thirty thousand! fifteen hundred francs of income, the price of my box at the Italiens, the fortune of many a bourgeois.—Oh! you Poles,"

she said, gathering flowers in her beautiful conservatory, "you are incredible. And you, yourself, you are not any more furious than that?"

"That poor Paz—"

"That poor Paz, poor Paz," she resumed, interrupting, "what good is he to us? I am going to place myself at the head of the household! You will give him the hundred louis of income which he refused, and he will make his arrangements as he pleases with the Cirque-Olympique."

"He is very useful to us, he has certainly saved us more than forty thousand francs in a year. In fact, dear angel, he has invested for us a hundred thousand francs with the Rothschilds, an intendant would have stolen them from us—"

Clémentine was mollified, but she was none the less hard toward Thaddeus. Some days later, she requested Paz to come into that boudoir where, a year previously, she had been surprised in comparing him to the count; this time, she received him for a tête-à-tête without perceiving the least danger in it.

"My dear Paz," she said to him with that familiarity without consequences, which the great assume towards their inferiors, "if you love Adam as you say you do, you will do a thing which he will never ask of you, but which I, his wife, I do not hesitate to exact of you—"

"It concerns Malaga," said Thaddeus with profound irony.

"Well, yes," she said; "if you wish to end

your days with us, if you wish that we should remain good friends, leave her. What! an old soldier—"

"I am only thirty-five, and not a white hair!"

"You have the air of being one," she said, "it is the same thing. How a man as skilful a manager, as distinguished—"

There was something so horrible about it that this word was said by her with an evident intention of reawakening in him the nobility of soul which she believed to be extinct.

"As distinguished as you are," she resumed after an imperceptible pause, which a gesture of Paz had caused her to make, "allows himself to be trapped like a child! Your adventure has made Malaga celebrated.—Well, my uncle has wished to see her, and he has seen her. My uncle is not the only one, Malaga receives all these gentlemen very well.—I thought that you had a noble soul.—For shame! See now, would it be so great a loss for you that it could not be repaired?"

"Madame, if I knew a sacrifice to make to regain your esteem, it would soon be accomplished; but to leave Malaga is not one of—"

"In your position, that is what I would say if I were a man," replied Clémentine. "Well, if I take that for a great sacrifice, it is not something at which to be vexed."

Paz went out, fearing to commit some folly; he felt himself a prey to mad ideas. He went to walk in the open air, lightly clothed, notwithstanding the

cold, without being able to extinguish the fire of his face and of his forehead.

"I thought that you had a noble soul!" These words, he should hear them forever.

"And it is not yet a year," he said to himself, "according to Clémentine, since I beat the Russians single-handed!"

He thought of leaving the Hôtel Laginski, of seeking service in the Spahis and getting himself killed in Africa; but he was arrested by a horrible fear.

"Without me, what would become of them? They would soon be ruined. Poor countess! What a horrible life for her to be reduced to only thirty thousand francs income! Come," said he to himself, "since she is lost to me, courage, and let us complete my work."

Everyone knows that, since 1830, the Carnival in Paris has undergone a prodigious development which renders it truly European and burlesque in a very changed fashion, and exciting otherwise than was the late Carnival of Venice. Is it that, as fortunes are immeasurably diminishing, the Parisians have invented means of amusing themselves collectively, as with their clubs they make salons without mistresses of the household, without politeness and very cheaply? However this may be, the month of March was then prodigal of these balls in which the dancing, the farce, the gross pleasure, the delirium, the grotesque images and the jests sharpened by the Parisian wit, attained gigantic effects. This folly had then in the Rue Saint-Honoré, its Pandemonium,

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AT MOSARD'S

At four o'clock in the morning, the countess, enveloped in a black domino and seated on the steps of one of the amphitheatres of this Babylonian hall, in which, since then, Valentino gives his concerts, saw defile before her in the galop, Thaddeus as Robert Macaire conducting the circus-rider in the costume of a female savage, her head adorned with plumes like a horse of a coronation carriage, and bounding above the groups like a real gnis-fatuus.

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defile before her in the group, Thaddeus as Robert
Macaire conducting the circus-rider in the costume
of a female smuggler, her head adorned with plumes
like a horse of a coronation carriage, and bounding
above the groups like a real gymnis-Latinus.

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and in Musard, its Napoléon, a little man constructed expressly to direct a music as powerful as the multitude in disorder, and to conduct the galop, this whirl of the Sabbat, one of the glories of Auber, for the galop has only had its form and its poesy since the grand galop of *Gustave*. This immense finale, may it not serve as a symbol of an epoch in which, for the last fifty years, everything has passed with the rapidity of a dream? Now, the grave Thaddeus, who carried a divine and immaculate image in his heart, was going to propose to Malaga, the queen of the dances of the Carnival, to pass a night at the Musard ball, when he learned that the countess, completely disguised, intended coming to see, with two other young women accompanied by their husbands, the curious spectacle of one of these monstrous balls. On Shrove Tuesday of the year 1838, at four o'clock in the morning, the countess, enveloped in a black domino and seated on the steps of one of the amphitheatres of this Babylonian hall, in which since then, Valentino gives his concerts, saw defile before her in the galop, Thaddeus as Robert Macaire conducting the circus-rider in the costume of a female savage, her head adorned with plumes like a horse of a coronation carriage, and bounding above the groups like a real ignis-fatuus.

"Ah!" said Clémentine to her husband, "you Poles, you are people without character. Who would not have had confidence in Thaddeus? He gave me his word, without knowing that I should be here, seeing everything and not being seen."

Some days later Paz dined with her. After the dinner, Adam left them alone, and Clémentine scolded Thaddeus in such a manner as to make him feel that she no longer wished him in the house.

"Yes, madame," said Thaddeus, humbly "you are right, I am a wretch, I had given my word. But what would you have! I had put off leaving Malaga until after the Carnival.—I will be frank, moreover, —this woman has such a hold over me that—"

"A woman who causes herself to be put out of Musard's by the police and for such a dance!"

"I admit it, I confess myself in the wrong, I will leave *your* house; but you know Adam. If I abandon to you the reins of your fortune, it will be necessary for you to display a great deal of energy. If I have the vice of Malaga, I know how to have an eye on all your affairs, to superintend your servants and to watch over the least details. Let me then not leave you until after having seen you in a condition to continue my administration. You have now been married three years, and you are saíe from the first follies which are committed during the honeymoon. The Parisian women and those of the highest titles, understand very well to-day the administration of a fortune and a household.—Well, when I shall be certain, less of your capacity than of your firmness, I will leave Paris."

"It is the Thaddeus of Warsaw and not the Thaddeus of the Cirque who speaks," she replied. "Return to us cured."

"Cured?—Never," said Paz, his eyes lowered,

looking at Clémentine's pretty feet. "You are ignorant, countess, of how much of the piquant and the unexpected there is in this woman's wit."

And, feeling his courage fail, he added:

"There is no woman of the world with her conceited airs, who is worth the fresh nature of the young animal—"

"The fact is, that I do not wish to have anything animal," said the countess, darting at him the look of an angry viper.

Dating from that morning, Comte Paz instructed Clémentine in all her affairs, made himself her preceptor, taught her the difficulties of the administration of her goods, the true price of things and the manner of not allowing herself to be too much robbed by people. She could count on Constantin and make him her major-domo. Thaddeus had formed Constantin. In the month of May, the countess seemed to him perfectly capable of looking after her fortune; for Clémentine was one of those women with a discerning eye, full of right instincts, and in whom the genius of the mistress of a household is innate.

This situation, brought about by Thaddeus with so much naturalness, had a sudden and horrible change of fortune for him, for his sufferings could not remain as tolerable as he had made them out to himself. This poor lover had not taken chance into his calculations. Now, Adam fell very seriously ill. Thaddeus, instead of departing, served as sick-nurse to his friend. The devotion of the captain was indefatigable. A woman who had an interest

in setting forth the far-sightedness of perspicacity would have seen, in the heroism of the captain, a sort of punishment, which the noble souls impose upon themselves in order to repress their involuntary evil thoughts; but the women see everything or see nothing according to the dispositions of their souls: Love is their sole light.

During forty-five days Paz watched over, cared for Mitgislas without appearing to think once of Malaga, for the excellent reason that he had never thought of her. In seeing Adam at death's door and not dying, Clémentine assembled the most celebrated doctors.

"If he recover from this," said the wisest of the physicians, "it can only be through an effort of nature. It is for those who are watching him to take care of this moment and to second the efforts of nature. The life of the count is in the hands of his sick-nurses."

Thaddeus went to communicate this decree to Clémentine, then seated under the Chinese pavilion, as much to seek repose from her fatigues as to leave the field free to the doctors and not to be in their way. In following the turns of a sanded alley which led from the boudoir to the rock on which rose the Chinese pavilion, Clémentine's lover was, as it were, at the bottom of one of the abysses described by Alighieri. The unfortunate man had not foreseen the possibility of becoming the husband of Clémentine and had buried himself in a ditch of mud. He came to her with his countenance in

disorder, sublime in sorrow. His head, like that of Medusa, diffused despair.

"He is dead?"—said Clémentine.

"They have condemned him; at least, they have left him to nature. Do not go in yet, they are there still, and Bianchon will himself take off the dressings."

"Poor man! I ask myself if I have not sometimes tormented him," said she.

"You have rendered him very happy, you may be easy on that subject, and you have been indulgent to him—"

"My loss will be irreparable."

"But, dear, supposing that the count succumb, had you not recognized his character?"

"I loved him without blindness," she said; "but I loved him as a wife should love her husband."

"You should then," resumed Thaddeus, in a voice that Clémentine did not recognize as his, "have less regret than if you had lost one of those men who are, to you women, your pride, your love, and your whole life! You can be sincere with a friend such as I am.—I shall regret him myself.—Long before your marriage, I had made of him my child and I have sacrificed to him my life. I shall be then without any interest on the earth. But life is still beautiful to a widow of twenty-four."

"Eh! you know very well that I love no one," she said, with the abruptness of grief.

"You do not know yet what it is to love," said Thaddeus.

"Oh! husband for husband, I am sensible enough to prefer a child like my poor Adam to a superior man. Here it is now nearly thirty days that we have been saying to each other: 'Will he live?' these alternations have well prepared me, as you are, for this loss. I can be frank with you. Well, I would give my life to preserve that of Adam. The independence of a woman in Paris, is it not the permission to lend herself to the semblances of love of ruined or dissipated men? I pray God to leave me this husband so complacent, so good a companion, so little suspicious, and who commenced to fear me."

"You are right, and I love you the more for it," said Thaddeus, taking and kissing the hand of Clémentine, who permitted him. "In these so solemn moments there is an inexplicable satisfaction in finding a woman without hypocrisy. One can talk with you. Let us look at the future; let us suppose that God does not listen to you, and I am one of those who are the most disposed to cry to him: 'Leave me my friend!' Yes, these fifty nights have not dimmed my eyes, and should it require thirty days and thirty nights of care, you should sleep, you, madame, whilst I watch. I would know how to wrest him from death if, as *they* say, he could be saved by watchful care. Finally, in spite of you and in spite of me, the count is dead. Well, if you were loved, oh! adored by a man of heart and of character worthy of your own—"

"I have, perhaps, foolishly desired to be loved, but I have not met—"

"If you had been deceived—"

Clémentine looked steadily at Thaddeus, crediting him less with love than with cupidity, she enveloped him in her scorn while regarding him from head to foot, and crushed him with these two words: "Poor Malaga!" pronounced in three tones which the great ladies alone are able to find in the register of their disdain. She rose, left Thaddeus overwhelmed, for she did not turn, walked with a noble movement toward her boudoir and ascended again to the chamber of Adam.

An hour later, Paz returned to the sick man's chamber; and, as if he had not received a mortal blow, he redoubled his care for the count. From that fatal moment, he became taciturn; he took up his duel with the malady, he contested its progress in such a manner as to excite the admiration of the physicians. At any hour of the day or night his eyes were still lit like two lamps. Without betraying the least resentment to Clémentine, he listened to her thanks without accepting them, he seemed to be deaf. He said to himself:

"She shall owe me Adam's life!"

And this phrase he wrote, as it were, in characters of fire on the walls of the sickroom. The fifteenth day Clémentine was obliged to relax her own cares under penalty of succumbing to so great a fatigue. Paz was indefatigable. Finally, toward the end of the month of August, Bianchon, the family physician, answered for the count's life to Clémentine.

"Ah! madame, you are not under the least obligation to me," he said. "We should never have been able to save him had it not been for his friend!"

The day after the terrible scene under the Chinese pavilion, the Marquis de Ronquerolles had come to see his nephew; for he was about to set out for Russia, charged with some secret mission, and Paz, crushed the day before, had said a few words to the diplomat. On the day on which Comte Adam and his wife went out for the first time in their carriage, at the moment when the calèche turned from the door, a gendarme entered the court of the hôtel and asked for the Comte Paz. Thaddeus, on the front seat of the calèche, turned to take a letter which bore the stamp of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and put it in the side-pocket of his coat with a movement which prevented Clémentine and Adam from asking him about it. It cannot be denied that in good company there is a science of languages which does not speak. Nevertheless, when they arrived at the Porte Maillot, Adam, availing himself of the privileges of a convalescent whose caprices should be satisfied, said to Thaddeus:

"There cannot be any indiscretion between two brothers who love each other as much as we love each other; you know the contents of the dispatch, tell it to me, I am in a fever of curiosity."

Clémentine looked at Thaddeus like a woman much vexed and said to her husband:

"He has been so gruff to me for the last two months that I certainly would not insist."

"Oh! *Mon Dieu,*" replied Thaddeus, "as I cannot prevent the newspapers from publishing it, I will certainly reveal the secret to you,—the Emperor Nicholas has done me the favor to appoint me captain of a regiment destined for the expedition to Khiva."

"And you are going there?" cried Adam.

"I will go, my dear fellow. I came captain, captain I will return.—Malaga might lead me into foolish extravagances. We dine together to-morrow for the last time. If I do not set out in September for St. Petersburg, it will be necessary to go there by land, and I am not rich, I must leave to Malaga her little independence. Why should I not watch over the future of the only woman who has known how to understand me? She thinks me great, Malaga! Malaga thinks me handsome! Malaga is perhaps unfaithful to me, but she would pass through the—"

"Through the paper hoop for you and light on her horse again very well," said Clémentine, quickly.

"Oh! you do not know Malaga," said the captain with profound bitterness and a look full of irony which rendered Clémentine thoughtful and unquiet. —"Farewell the young trees of this beautiful Bois de Boulogne, where the Parisian ladies take their exercise, where the exiles promenade, who again find a country here. I am certain that my eyes will never see again the green trees of the Allée de Mademoiselle, nor those of the Route des Dames, nor the acacias, nor the cedar of the Round Points. —On the shores of Asia, obeying the designs of the

great Emperor whom I have taken for a master, risen, perhaps, to the command of an army through courage, through putting my life at stake, perhaps I shall regret the Champs-Élysées, where you once made me take my seat beside you. Finally, I shall always regret the cruelty of Malaga,—the Malaga of whom I am speaking at this moment."

This was said in such a manner as to make Clémentine shudder.

"You then love Malaga greatly?" she asked.

"I have sacrificed to her that honor which we never sacrifice—"

"Which?"

"Why, that which we wish to keep at any cost in the eyes of our idol."

After this reply, Thaddeus kept the most impenetrable silence; and he only broke it when passing through the Champs-Élysées, where he said, indicating a wooden building:

"There is the Cirque!"

He went a few moments before dinner to the Russian Embassy, from there to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and he set out for Havre the next morning before Adam and the countess had arisen.

"I have lost a friend," said Adam, with tears in his eyes on hearing of the departure of Comte Paz, "a friend in the true meaning of the word, and I do not know what can have made him fly from my house as though it were infected. We are not friends to quarrel about a woman," said he, looking fixedly at Clémentine, "and yet everything that he said

yesterday about Malaga—But he has never touched that girl with the end of his finger.—"

"How do you know it?" said Clémentine.

"Why, I naturally had the curiosity to go and see Mademoiselle Turquet, and the poor girl cannot yet explain to herself the absolute reserve of Thad—"

"Enough, monsieur," said the countess, who retired to her own apartment, saying to herself: "Am I not the victim of some sublime mystification?"

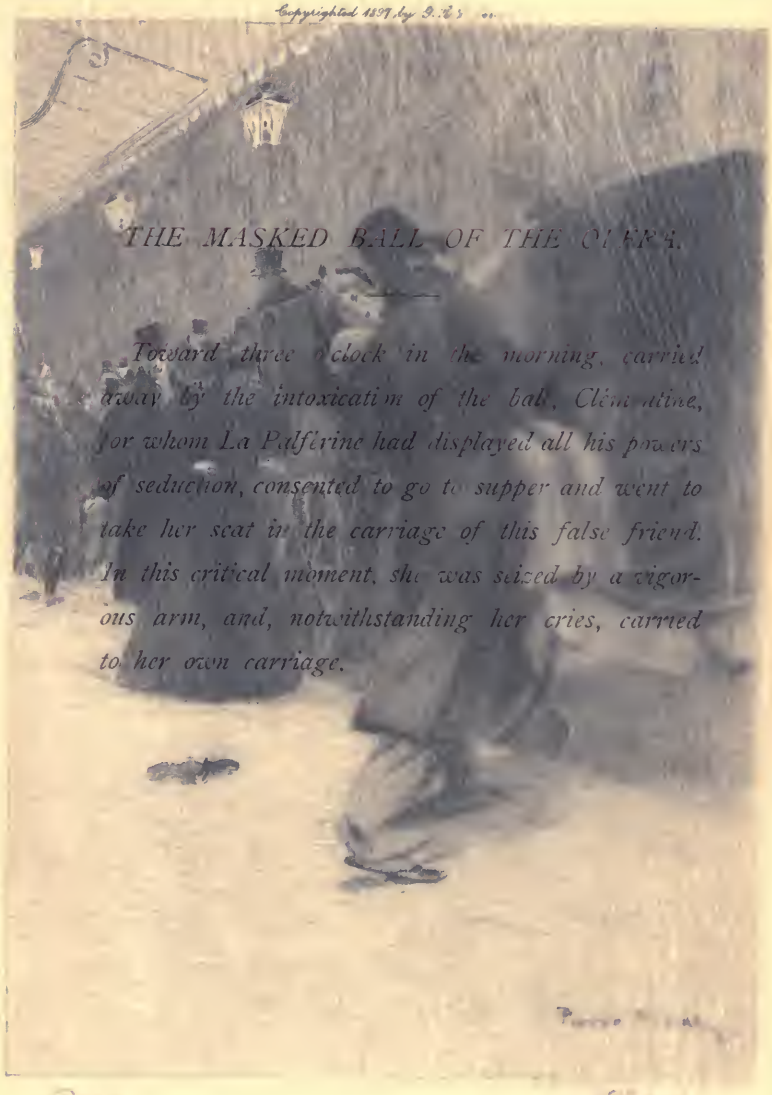
Scarcely had she finished this phrase to herself, when Constantin handed her the following letter, which Thaddeus had scrawled during the night:

"COUNTESS,

"To go to have one's self killed in the Caucasus and to endure your scorn, is too much: one had better die at once. I loved you dearly when I saw you for the first time, as one cherishes a woman whom he will love forever, even after her unfaithfulness: I, the indebted of Adam whom you had chosen and whom you married, I, poor, I, the willing and devoted administrator of your household. In this horrible misfortune, I found the most delightful life. To be for you an indispensable piece of machinery, to know myself useful to your luxury, to your comfort, was a source of pleasures; and if these pleasures were lively in my soul when it concerned Adam, you may judge what they were when an adored woman became the principle and the cause! I have known the pleasures of maternity in love: I accepted life thus. I had, like the poor on the highways, built a cabin of pebbles on the edge of your beautiful domain, without extending to you my hand. Poor and unhappy, blinded by the happiness of Adam, I was the giver. Ah! you were surrounded by a love pure as that of a guardian angel, it

watched whilst you slept, it caressed you with a look when you passed, it was happy merely to be; in short, you were the sunshine of the fatherland to this poor exile, who writes to you with tears in his eyes, in thinking of this happiness of the early days. At the age of eighteen, not being loved by any one, I had taken for an ideal mistress, a charming woman of Warsaw to whom I brought all my thoughts, my desires, the queen of my days and of my nights! This woman knew nothing of it; but why should she have been informed?—I! I loved my love. You may judge, from this youthful episode, how happy I was to live within the sphere of your existence, to take care of your horse, to seek for entirely new gold-pieces for your purse, to superintend the pleasures of your table and of your soirées, to see you eclipsing those whose fortunes are superior to yours, by my knowledge and economy. With what ardor did I not precipitate myself into Paris when Adam said to me: "Thaddeus, *she* wishes such and such a thing!" It was one of those felicities impossible to describe. You have wished for trifles in a certain time which have obliged me to make extraordinary efforts, to run around for seven hours in a cabriolet; and how delightful to go for you! To see you smiling in the midst of your flowers, without being seen by you, I forgot that no one loved me.—In short, I was still in my eighteenth year. On certain days on which my happiness turned my head, I would go in the night to kiss the spot where for me your feet had left luminous traces, as formerly I performed the miracles of a thief to go and kiss the key which the Comtesse Ladislas had touched with her hand in opening a door! The air which you breathed was balsamic; there was in it, for me to breathe, more than life, and I was in it, as it is said, under the tropics men are, overcome by a vapor charged with the principles of creation. It is quite necessary to say these things to you to explain to you the strange fatuitousness of my involuntary thoughts. I would have died before avowing to you my secret! You may remember the few days of curiosity during which you wished to see the author of the miracles which

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THE MASKED BALL OF THE OPERA.

Toward three o'clock in the morning, carried away by the intoxication of the ball, Clémentine, for whom La Palférine had displayed all his powers of seduction, consented to go to supper and went to take her seat in the carriage of this false friend. In this critical moment, she was seized by a vigorous arm, and, notwithstanding her cries, carried to her own carriage.

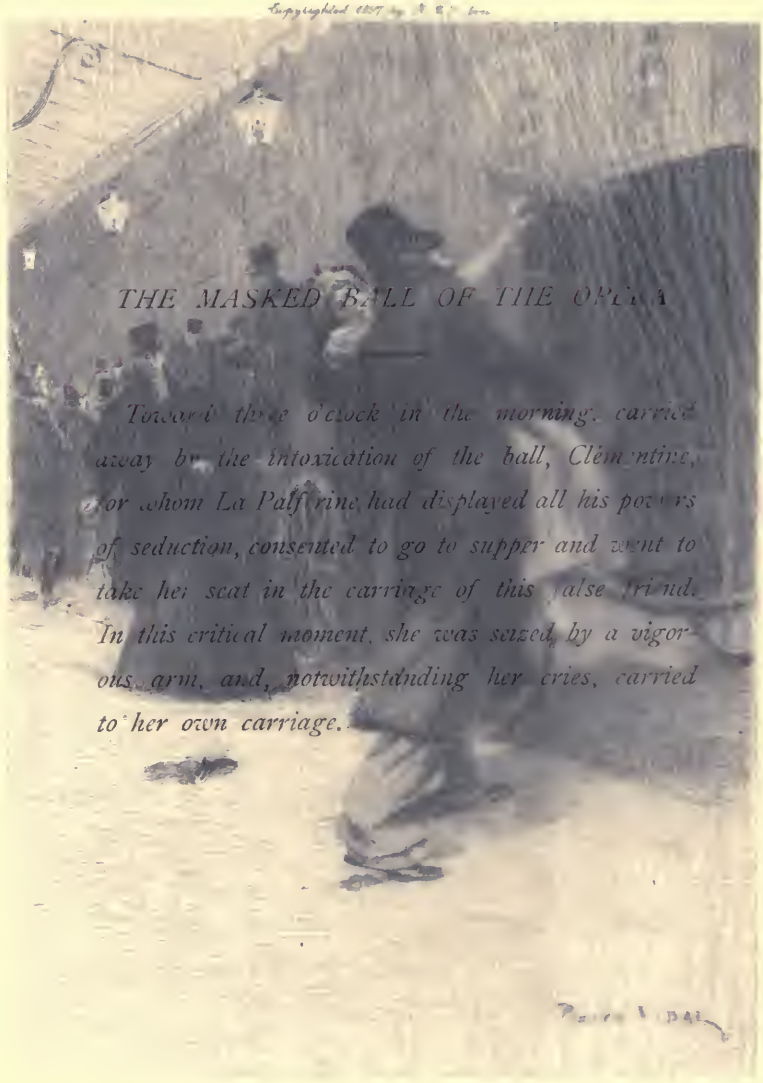
watched whilst you slept, it caressed you with a look when you passed, it was happy merely to be; in short, you were the sunshine of the fatherland to this poor exile, who writes to you with tears in his eyes, in thinking of this happiness of the early days. At the age of eighteen, not being loved by any one, I had taken for an ideal mistress, a charming woman of Warsaw to whom I brought all my thoughts, my desires, the queen of my days and of my nights! This woman knew nothing of it; but why should she have been informed?—I! I loved my love. You may judge, from this youthful episode, how happy I was to live within the sphere of your existence, to take care of your horse, to seek for entirely new gold-pieces for your purse, to superintend the pleasures of your table and of your soirées, to see you eclipsing those whose fortunes are superior to yours, by my knowledge and economy. With what ardor did I not precipitate myself into Paris when Adam said to me: "Thaddeus, she wishes such and such a thing!" It was one of those felicities impossible to describe. You gave me wished for tasks in a certain time which have obliged me to make extraordinary efforts, to run around for seven hours in a cabriolet; and how delightful to go for you! To see you smiling in the midst of your flowers, without being seen by you, I forgot that no one loved me.—In short, I was still in my eighteenth year. On certain days on which my happiness turned my head, I would go in the night to kiss the spot where for me your feet had left luminous traces, as formerly I performed the miracles of a thief to go and kiss the key which the Comtesse Ladislas had touched with her hand in opening a door! The air which you breathed was balsamic; there was in it, for me to breathe, more than life, and I was in it, as it is said, under the tropics men are, overcome by a vapor charged with the principles of creation. It is quite necessary to say these things to you to explain to you the strange fatuitousness of my involuntary thoughts. I would have died before avowing to you my secret! You may remember the few days of curiosity during which you wished to see the author of the miracles which

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Decisy

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had finally attracted your attention. I thought, forgive me, madame, I thought that you might love me. Your generosity, your looks interpreted by a lover appeared to me so dangerous for myself, that I took up Malaga, knowing that this was one of those liaisons which women never forgive: I took it up at the moment in which I saw my love fatally communicate itself. Overwhelm me now with the contempt which you have poured upon me without my meriting it; but I think myself certain that, on that evening on which your aunt took away the count, if I had said to you that which I have just written to you, having said it once, I should have been like the tame tiger who has again set his teeth in living flesh, who scents the hot blood, and—

"Midnight.

"I have not been able to continue, the memory of that hour is still too vivid! Yes, I was then in a delirium. There was hope in your eyes, victory and its red banners should have shone in mine and fascinated yours. My crime has been to think all this, perhaps wrongly. You alone are the judge of this terrible scene in which I was able to tread under my feet love, desire, the most invincible forces of a man, to suppress them under the icy hand of a gratitude which should be eternal. Your terrible scorn has punished me. You have proved to me that there is no return from either disgust or contempt. I love you like a madman. I should have departed if Adam had died: I have much greater reason for departing, Adam saved. One does not wrest his friend from the arms of death in order to deceive him. Moreover, my departure is the punishment for the thought which I had, to let him perish when the doctors said to me that his life depended upon his sick-nurses. Farewell, madame; I lose everything in leaving Paris, and you lose nothing in having no longer near you,

"Your devoted

"THADDEUS PAC."

"If my poor Adam says he has lost a friend, what have I then lost?" said Clémentine to herself, overwhelmed, her eyes fixed on a flower in her carpet.

This is the letter which Constantin handed privately to the count:

"MY DEAR MITGISLAS,

"Malaga has told me everything. In the name of your happiness, do not let Clementine ever hear a word of your visits to the circus-rider, and let her always think that Malaga cost me a hundred thousand francs. With the countess's character, she would never forgive you either your losses at play or your visits to Malaga. I am not going to Khiva, but to the Caucasus. I have the spleen, and in the state of mind in which I am, I shall be Prince Paz in three years, or dead. Adieu; although I have taken sixty thousand francs from the Rothschilds, we are quits with each other.

"THADDEUS."

"What an imbecile I am! I was on the point of contradicting myself just now," said Adam to himself.

It is now three years since Thaddeus has gone away, the newspapers as yet make no mention of any Prince Paz. The Comtesse Laginski is greatly interested in all the expeditions of the Emperor Nicholas, she is a Russian at heart, she reads with a species of avidity all the news which comes from that country. Once or twice a winter, she says with an indifferent air to the ambassador:

"Do you know what has become of our poor Comte Paz?"

Alas! the greater number of Parisian women, those creatures who pretend to be so clear-seeing and so spiritual, pass and will always pass a Paz by without perceiving him. Yes, more than one Paz is overlooked; but, frightful to think! there are those that are unrecognized even when they are loved. The most simple woman in the world requires still from the greatest man a little charlatanism; and the most beautiful love signifies nothing when it is unpolished,—it requires the setting of the cutting and of the goldsmith's work.

In the month of January, 1842, the Comtesse Laginski, adorned with her soft melancholy, inspired the most furious passion in the breast of the Comte de la Palférine, one of the most enterprising lions of the Paris of to-day. La Palférine comprehended the dificulty of the conquest of a woman guarded by a chimera,—to be able to carry away this charming creature, he counted upon a surprise and upon the devotion of a woman somewhat jealous of Clémentine and who would lend herself to the bringing about of the chances of this surprise.

Incapable, notwithstanding all her wit, of suspecting such a treason, the Comtesse Laginski committed the imprudence of going with this pretended female friend to the masked ball of the Opéra. Toward three o'clock in the morning, carried away by the intoxication of the ball, Clémentine, for whom La Palférine had displayed all his powers of seduction, consented to go to supper and went to take her seat in the carriage of this false friend. In this

critical moment, she was seized by a vigorous arm, and, notwithstanding her cries, carried to her own carriage, the door of which was open and which she did not know was there.

"He has not left Paris," she cried, recognizing Thaddeus, who took himself off, when he saw the carriage bearing the countess away.

Has any other woman had such a romance in her life?

At every moment, Clémentine hopes again to see Paz.

Paris, January, 1842.

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